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JANUARY/FEBRUARY
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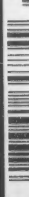
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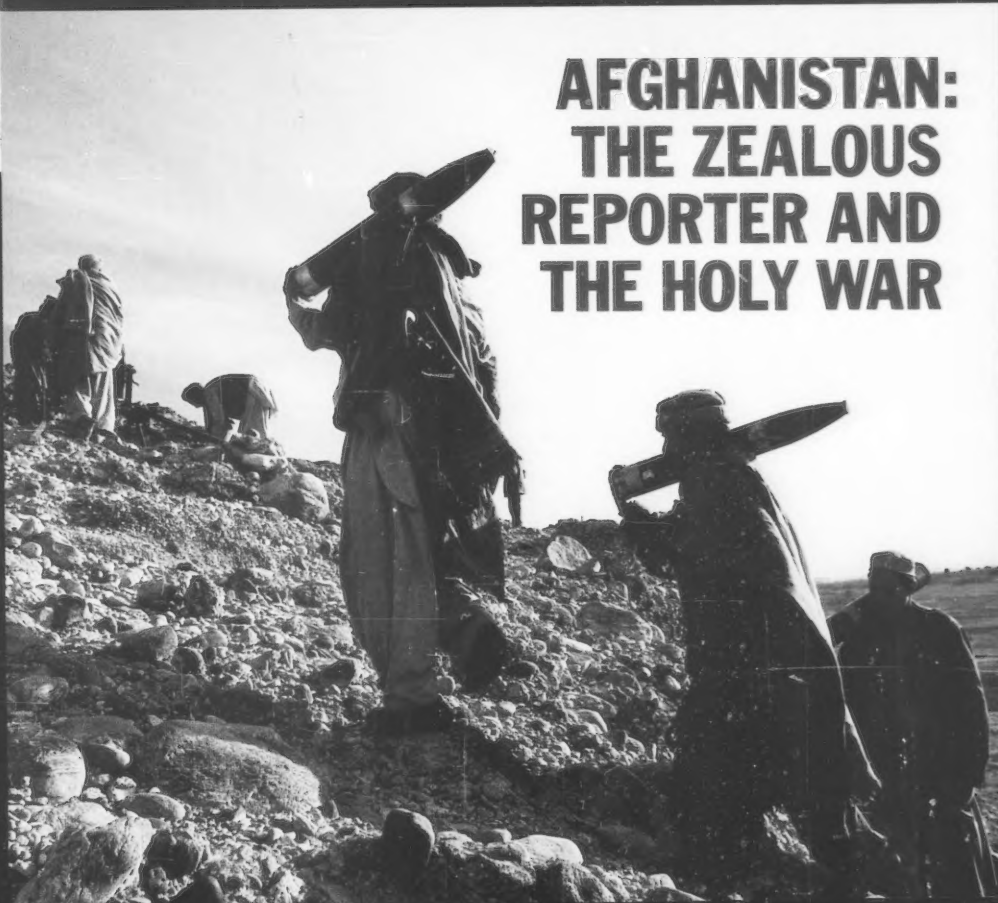
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Mission: Afghanistan

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CJR

"TO ASSESS
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TO HELP STIMULATE
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AND TO SPEAK OUT
FOR WHAT IS
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THE TROUBLE WITH HARRY

◆
HIGH TECHNOLOGY CAN NOW ALTER
A MOVING VIDEO IMAGE

◆
Is seeing believing?

Phil Donahue's hair is white, as usual. But a video artist for NBC News moves an electronic paintbrush across an electronic palette, activating commands on a computer-graphics machine known as the Harry — a *Star Trek*-like thing that is blinking away in a back room. From a selection that appears on a video screen, he mixes colors; suddenly, on the monitor, Donahue's hair is black. "The Harry does in an instant what Grecian Formula would take two to three weeks to do," he says.

"Give Phil a beard," suggests David Schmerler, the general manager of editorial and production services at NBC News. A few minutes later Phil Donahue looks like Captain Ahab.

What's revolutionary about the Harry is that it can alter a *moving* image at thirty frames of video per second. Given more time, the artist, Steven Giangrasso (who recently left NBC), could have shown a bearded, black-haired Donahue bounding around his studio. He could have changed the microphone in his hand to a gun, or a rose. Or, by combining video images, he could have had him running around Oprah Winfrey's studio. Or Beirut. Or Sesame Street.

Before the Harry became available three years ago, only a still video image could be manipulated, on a device called the Paint Box, which, like the Harry, is made by an English company, Quantel.

At \$400,000 each, the Harry — a nickname that has no meaning — is not yet standard equipment in the production of television news, although NBC already owns two of them.

Giangrasso pulls from the Harry's memory an animated graphic he has been working on to illustrate a news story about the Strategic Defense Initiative. He takes an image — a portion of that video on the screen — and puts new objects into the image. Finally, he takes a *Star Wars* satellite from his animated graphic and has it fly through Phil Donahue's studio. "In seeing this, the question you're probably asking yourself is, 'How do I know that this isn't being done on a regular basis?'" says Schmerler. "My question to you is, 'How do I know that you won't manipulate what I've said in the *Columbia Journalism Review*?' " Schmerler's point is that, with the arrival of this technology, video, like a written text, must be verified and fact-checked.

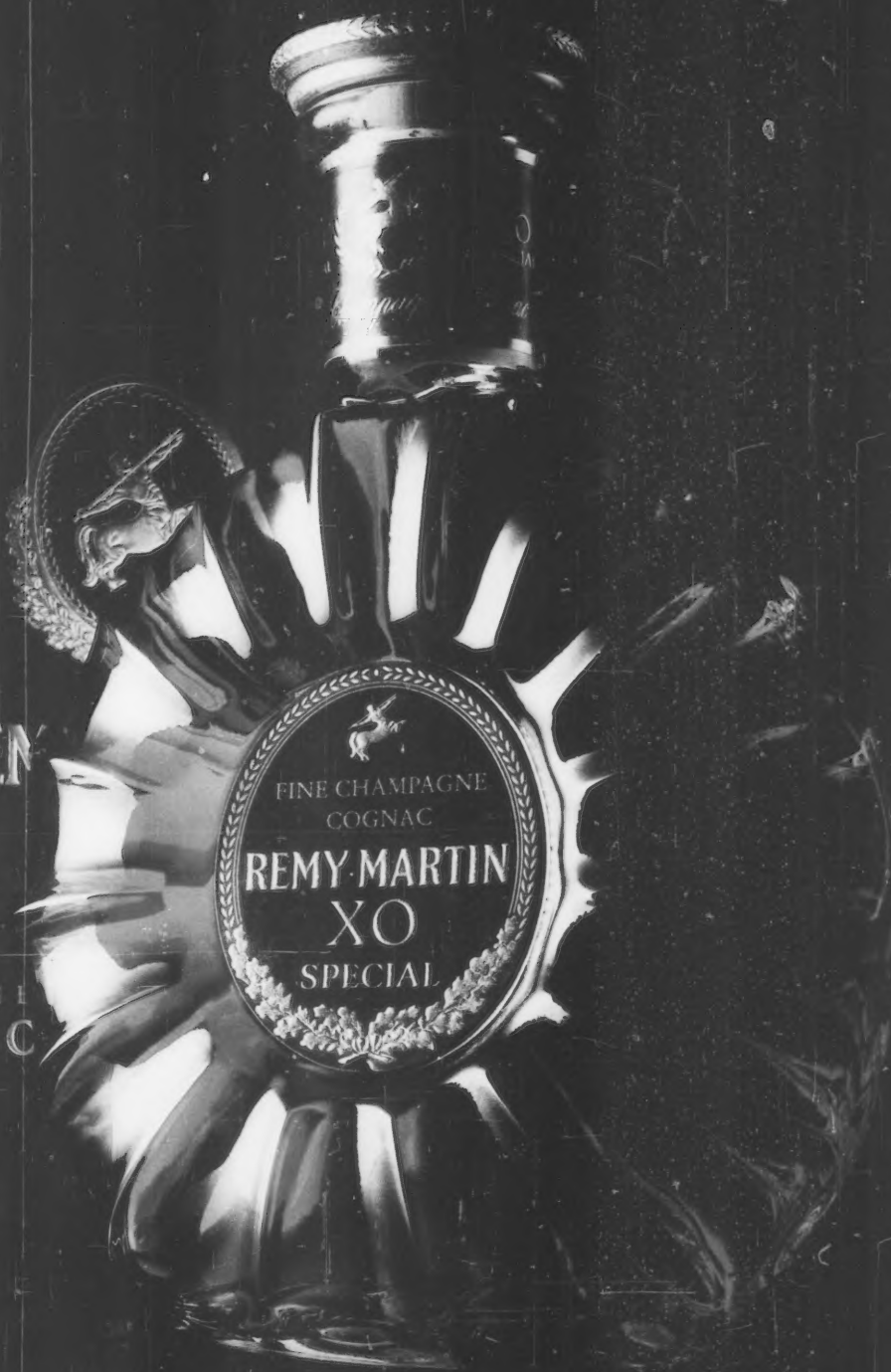
While there are no written guidelines on digital manipulation of images at NBC, there is an understanding that no

image is to be manipulated or altered in any way; the Harry is used largely for animated graphics, such as the S.D.I. image, for example, or the projected path of a hurricane. Whether other organizations that have access to the Harry will exercise such self-restraint is another question, however, one that may soon pose troubling questions for television news operations. Thomas Wolzien, senior vice-president of regional news at NBC, fears that the Harry will permit governments and others to produce video lies — moving pictures that look so authentic that the eye cannot detect what has been changed. And since the Harry breaks down the video image into digital components and then reassembles them, even an expert would be unable to detect Harry's handiwork. "The Harry is amoral," says Wolzien. "The danger is in what I refer to as the video river. There's this huge flow of video from all around the world."

Wolzien says that this growing international exchange of news video makes it possible for news organizations to "cover" events without actually being



courtesy NBC News



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on the scene — by using somebody else's video — and that television economics encourages this trend. The sources of this "video river" range from state-run broadcasting organizations to stringers, and it can be very difficult to determine where a video image has come from — let alone whether it has been altered.

As one hypothetical example, Wolzien imagines a videotape of Nicaraguan PT boats attacking a U.S. destroyer. The boats look as if they are shooting; the administration says the tape is real; the guns certainly flash? Do we go to war? Or is it the Harry?

Wolzien argues that television news organizations must identify sources of their video images, the way responsible journalists identify sources in stories. And NBC, he says, is working on a sort of universal product code that would tell a news organization who shot a video and where, and who handled it afterwards. To safeguard the video river, of course, such coding would have to be agreed upon and used worldwide.

Earlier developments in digital technology raised similar credibility issues for still photographers and editors. Seven years ago, using a machine called the Scitex, *National Geographic*, for example, was able to move an Egyptian pyramid on one of its covers. "We did move it slightly," says Jim Whitney, associate director of engraving and printing at *National Geographic*, "but we don't do that anymore."

Scitex technology was also used on the cover of a book of U.S. photographs, *A Day in the Life of America*, published in 1986; the picture — a scene of a moon, a cowboy on a horse, and a tree — is a digital composite. "That is not a photograph; it's not a truthful representation of what happened," says Ed Hart, a picture editor at UPI.

Scitex has proved valuable as a production tool, and as an electronic airbrush for advertisers and others, but its potential for making undetectably false pictures is worrisome. "Don't get me wrong — I sleep nights. But our credibility is at stake," Hart says. Now that the Harry has arrived, television journalists, too, have to guard against pictures that lie.

Daniel Sheridan

Daniel Sheridan is an intern at CJR.

BASTARDS! KLINGONS! EASY AS PI!

THE HIT-AND-MISS NACHMAN ERA
AT THE NEW YORK POST

Pushing the publisher's politics?

In his first staff meeting as editor of the *New York Post* last May, Jerry Nachman directed his employees to "go after the Klingons," the bad guys of *Star Trek* or, in Nachman's universe, "the *Daily News*, *New York Newsday*, and people in government who are not doing their job for the people of the city of New York." Four weeks later the *Post* fired its first photon torpedo, printing a set of leaked answers to the New York State Regents Exam in chemistry on its front page, under a headline that screamed EASY AS PI.

Never mind that *pi* has more to do with trigonometry than chemistry. The other New York papers also carried brief stories about the widespread cheating, but *Post* reporter Timothy McDarragh had obtained on the street a set of answers to the important citywide exam. Nachman put them on page one, forcing furious school officials to cancel the contaminated test.

The Regents story was the first in a series of brash front-page pieces that distinguished Nachman's *Post* from that of former *Post* editor Jane Amsterdam. Amsterdam is widely credited with restoring the *Post*'s credibility after the Rupert Murdoch era, although some reporters, like Bill Hoffmann, found her to be "a little gun shy." Six months after Nachman's appointment — celebrated in the *Post*'s own pages with a longish story and a Pete Hamill column — it's clear that his paper will be sassier than the one that preceded it, but also sloppier, a little like Nachman himself.

The *Post* may be a little thin; Nachman is definitely not. He is round, short,



PAPER TRAIL: New York Post editor Jerry Nachman has given the tabloid a bolder, more aggressive edge, but his critics say he's sloppy. Meanwhile, his Sunday paper died and his staff has shrunk.

cocksure, full of junk-food energy, and anything but gun shy. In October, for example, the *Post* was so sure that New York Mets manager Davey Johnson had been fired that it said so in huge type on the front page (YER OUT) and the back (HE'S GONE). Johnson, however, is still on the job.

But the *Post* — one of six newspapers that *Time* magazine says President Bush reads each day — is too busy with the next shocker for regrets. And some of its zingers are aimed at big targets. In late September it alleged that phony and mislabeled Afghanistan footage had been sold to CBS by a free-lance film maker and broadcast on the evening news. RATHER AIRED FAKE AFGHAN BATTLES read the *Post*'s headline, blaming the CBS anchorman for the film maker's alleged misdeeds — and presumably selling more papers that way.

The film maker denied the charges and CBS had little to say. After promising a "point-by-point" rebuttal the network delivered only a three-sentence memo from news president David Burke, conceding that an aircraft had been unintention-



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CHRONICLE

tionally misidentified, but denying all of the *Post's* other allegations. The network has offered no further official comment, apparently hoping that no one would take seriously an attack coming from a noisy tabloid like the *Post*. (See "Mission: Afghanistan" on page 27).

Nachman's fans in the *Post* newsroom say he has given the paper a shot of adrenalin, that he knows a good tabloid story in his bones. For a newspaper that relies on street sales for 95 percent of its circulation, that is no small matter. The Nachman-era front page is almost always a grabber. On November 15, for example, it featured an exclusive photo of Ivan Boesky's new post-prison look: long, unkempt hair and a "Rip Van Winkle" beard. Two days later, after killer winds hit an upstate school and seven children died, the two-and-a-half-inch-high headline was simple and evocative: MOMMY!

Nachman has plenty of critics, some of whom claim that he's out of the office too much, leaving a vacuum at the top. The most serious charge, however, is that he sometimes shapes the news to please his boss — owner and publisher Peter S. Kalikow, who, with his wife Mary, was the subject of a six-by-five-inch photo in the November 16 *Post*, after they won a humanitarian award. (Kalikow, through a spokesman, declined to comment.)

Kalikow is a developer with many political connections, notably to New York Senator Alphonse M. D'Amato, whose campaign finance committee he once chaired. Critics note that while every major New York daily has advanced the story of D'Amato's connections to the unfolding HUD scandal, the *Post* has served mostly as a platform for the senator's defense. "I'm not sure that there is a corruption issue there. Impropropriety, perhaps," says Nachman, who adds that his Washington bureau is small. But the critics — including three former *Post* editors and some former and current *Post* reporters — are unconvinced. They point to another example, a story that badly hurt D'Amato's longtime political nemesis, Rudolph Giuliani.

On August 18, less than a month before the hard-fought New York mayoral primaries, the *Post* ran a damaging

story, under Nachman's co-byline, implying that Giuliani, a mayoral candidate and former federal prosecutor, had been responsible for terrorizing an Auschwitz survivor named Simon Berger, who had been arrested four years earlier as part of an investigation into corruption within the New York City Housing Authority. Berger said he had been forced to sit in front of a blackboard that, "amid a sea of doodles," bore an infamous Nazi slogan — *Arbeit Macht Frei*, Work Shall Set You Free, the words posted on the entrance to Auschwitz during the Holocaust. RUDY'S MEN ACTED LIKE NAZIS was the headline, and in the story Berger held Giuliani responsible for the incident.

What the *Post* failed to point out, however, is that Giuliani's role in the episode had been investigated in 1986 by a federal judge — after Berger alleged prosecutorial misconduct — and the judge found "not a scintilla of evidence" that the slogan had been intentionally shown to Berger. (Nachman concedes that this fact "absolutely ought" to have been in the story, but notes that Giuliani had once clerked for this judge.) The Anti-Defamation League of B'nai B'rith later found that the slogan had been on the blackboard weeks before Berger was questioned. And on August 27 the Klingons at *Newsday* reported that Berger and his family had over the last decade contributed thousands of dollars to Senator D'Amato. It should be noted that, at the time the story appeared, D'Amato was backing Giuliani's bitter rival, billionaire cosmetics heir Ronald Lauder, in the Republican mayoral primary. "The Simon Berger thing was probably Nachman's biggest mistake," says *Daily News* reporter Paul La Rosa. (Ironically, the *Post* — and D'Amato — ended up giving Giuliani an endorsement in the general election, after Lauder sank.)

But *Post* editorial staff members have had something more personally threatening to worry about these days than slanted coverage. The full-sized Sunday *Post*, launched with much fanfare in March 1989, was cut back to the size of the daily *Post* in June and was killed on November 26. The much-ballyhooed new real estate section was also killed. Thirty-eight employees represented by The Newspaper Guild have been laid off

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so far, and although the *Post* says that's the end of it, there are persistent printed rumors of more bloodshed. *Post* officials claim the Nachman effect began to show up in circulation gains late this fall. But in order to keep the *Post* up to warp speed, Captain Kalikow is jettisoning some of the crew. Desperate measures, but those Klingsons keep on coming.

Eddie Stern

Eddie Stern is a reporter for Spy magazine.

TRAILING A WEASEL WORD

HOW ARGUABLY UNLEASHED
A FLOOD OF SUPERLATIVES

The computer as bloodhound

One does not have to be a news writer for very long to become wary of superlatives. Whenever a reporter pronounces something the first, the biggest, the best, or the latest, a dozen letters or phone calls will point out a case that is earlier, bigger, better, or more recent. Once-bitten writers quickly develop weasel wording to avoid the superlative, but the solution is never quite satisfactory. "Possibly" and "probably" are effective attenuators, but they deprive the superlative of too much of its juice. "One of the what-everest" is safe, but it dilutes the impact by reducing the object of the superlative to a mere member of a class of indeterminate size.

Now a qualifier of choice has emerged. It made its debut sometime before the 1980s and quickly grew in popularity. It is "arguably," as in "Today, Gulfstream is arguably the most successful and profitable company in the general aviation business" (Bob Cox, *The Wichita Eagle-Beacon*, June 11, 1989). It says "Don't hold me to this folks, all I'm saying is that an argument can be made for the superlative."

And the freedom that "arguably"

provides has unleashed a flood of superlatives on the reading public. Knight-Ridder's Vu/Text database, which covers forty-six newspapers, some going back to the late 1970s, reveals a pattern of steady growth.

The Washington Post, for example, used an "arguably" in 68 stories during 1983, 94 the following year, then 113, then 122. The *Post* peaked in 1987 with 174 cases, and is still cranking out arguably-attenuated superlatives at about that rate. *The Philadelphia Inquirer*, whose Vu/Text records start two years earlier than the *Post*'s, had 52 uses of "arguably" in 1981, 89 the following year, and then a slow climb to the mid-130s, where the number has hovered since 1985.

The usage appears to have started in the East, with disproportionate application in the sports pages, where about one of every four Vu/Text-recorded uses of "arguably" can be found. The *Chicago Tribune* did not peak in its use until 1988, with 161. The *Los Angeles Times* lagged behind both the *Tribune* and *The Washington Post* until 1986, when it caught up with a vengeance: 190 cases of "arguably" in that year, compared with the *Post*'s 122 and the *Tribune*'s 142. And, whereas the *Post* has leveled off to an incidence of only one every other day, the *Times*'s usage is still growing explosively. This year, it logged 158 uses by mid-July, making it an arguable candidate for becoming the first newspaper in history to exceed 300 uses of "arguably" in a calendar year.

Where do such innovative uses of language begin? A global Vu/Text search, for every use in every newspaper for every year, flashed back to a country music review by Rich Aregood of the *Philadelphia Daily News* on March 31, 1978. "The songs included here [on a Jimmie Rodgers album] are arguably his 10 best," wrote Aregood. (Another early user was H.D.S. Greenway of *The Boston Globe*, who, on December 18, 1979, called the Strait of Hormuz "arguably the most important and vulnerable waterway in the world.")

Aregood does not remember what possessed him to use "arguably" in that 1978 review, nor does he recall any earlier use that gave him the idea. Does that make him the arguable creator of this usage?

"Jeez, I don't know," he says. "That's a helluva responsibility. If you find out I'm responsible for 'hopefully,' please don't tell me."

Philip Meyer

Philip Meyer teaches advanced reporting and other subjects at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

TIMBER!

DID INDUSTRY CUT DOWN
A CRUSADING REPORTER?

The war over the woods

There's a battle over the wildlands in western Montana. Was Richard Manning's job a casualty?

Manning is a former reporter for the *Missoulian* who has won several awards in his fourteen years as a journalist. He has written a number of controversial environmental stories about the timber industry for the *Missoula* daily, including a series in July 1989 that linked the Reverend Sun Myung Moon and his Unification Church to pro-development forces in the West. A series he did in October 1988 on accelerated logging on land owned by Plum Creek Timber and Champion International — both large out-of-state corporations that own the

biggest sawmills in Montana — hit even harder, and closer to home.

The series showed clearly that the two companies were harvesting trees much too fast to implement sound forestry practices. The cutting was so egregious, in fact, that in order to preserve ecological integrity the U.S. Forest Service was forced to curtail logging on lands it owns that border the Plum Creek and Champion acres. One Plum Creek official, Bill Parson, admitted to a writer for *Audubon* magazine that his company had sent a delegation from its headquarters in Seattle to the *Missoulian* to talk about Manning's coverage, and Manning believes that several such meetings were part of an industry campaign to get him off the environmental beat. Over the next several months, he adds, some timber company officials refused to talk to him.

Then, last August, Manning was told by *Missoulian* editor Brad Hurd that he was being reassigned to another, unspecified beat. Manning quit. Hurd contends that Manning was unable to report objectively on environmental issues, that his stories required heavy editing and additions for fairness. Timber company complaints, he says, played no part in the decision.

Some others at the paper say that the reasons for the reassignment were complex, and that they included Manning's acerbic and confrontational personality. Jim Ludwick, the *Missoulian*'s business

editor, who worked on stories with Manning and says he considers him a friend, maintains that Manning's biases were clear, that in the newsroom he "openly expressed malice toward the people he was writing about. He openly expressed the idea that these companies had no moral right to existence."

Since leaving the paper, Manning has made speeches that indicate he does indeed hold strong positions on environmental matters. In a piece written for *High Country News*, a Colorado paper that covers environmental issues in the western U.S., Manning said he didn't really disagree that his "personal commitment to the environment was beginning to show in my work . . . In doing my job I walked the clearcuts, the rutted skid trails, and the scoured creekbeds . . . Anyone who sees what I saw there can't help but write about those responsible with a touch of passion."

Newspapers, he wrote, have an inherent bias: "The real enemy is the consumerism that fuels the American economy . . . The average newspaper's financial health depends on fueling those habits."

Manning argues that his views shouldn't have mattered — only his stories, and that they were fair and professional. He also contends that the *Missoulian* and its publisher, Lee Enterprises, have their own biases. A number of present and former *Missoulian* employees are uneasy about publisher Phil Blake's significant role in economic booster activities and organizations. The newspaper recently began to co-sponsor a basketball tournament, for example, along with three forest-product companies — Champion International, Plum Creek Timber, and Stone Container Corporation.

The state's dailies have a history to overcome. Until 1959 the Anaconda Copper Mining Company, a giant concern that owned much of Montana, also owned seven of its eight largest newspapers — including the *Montana Standard* in Butte, the *Helena Independent Record*, the *Billings Gazette*, and the *Missoulian*. After Lee bought those papers the company broke their backshop unions and lowered pay. None of the four are known for enterprise reporting or generous news holes.

The *Missoulian* did nothing to en-



AXED:

Richard Manning's editor says he was biased against the timber companies. Manning says it is his former newspaper, the *Missoulian*, that didn't want to see those companies investigated.

hance its reputation when it refused to publish some thirty letters critical of the paper's firing of Manning. Hurd argues that the letters contain things that aren't true. The paper did report, however, that it picked up a regional investigative reporting honor — the Blethen award, sponsored by *The Seattle Times* — for Manning's 1988 series on the timber industry.

Jim Robbins

Jim Robbins is a free-lance writer who lives in Helena, Montana.

TO LIVE AND DIE IN L.A.

GOODBYE TO THE *HERALD EXAMINER*

The Los Angeles Herald Examiner had the respect of a lot of people in Los Angeles, but not that of the Hearst Cor-

poration's accountants. Hearst turned off the power on November 1, after months of uncertainty and false hopes. Reporter Alina Tugend kept a diary during those final days, and this is part of her entry on the day the Herald died:

November 1 — It happened. The worst happened. At eight this morning I went in to finish a Sunday story, and this evening I'm unemployed, the *Herald* is gone, and my story will never run.

Even though we've been anticipating it for months, somehow most of us still thought it wouldn't be until early next year. And as life-style editor Ellis Conklin said in his good-bye column, knowing you're going to be hit in the stomach doesn't lessen the pain of the blow.

I was at the Biltmore at one p.m., covering a speech by Jimmy Carter, when the announcement was made. Since early in the morning, when two *Times* reporters came into the office saying they had heard something was going to happen today, we had been on edge. I told a reporter to call me if anything

broke. When I left the building, a television crew was parked out front. The editors told me they didn't care if I covered the speech or not, but I couldn't stand being in the newsroom anymore.

Halfway through the speech, a p.r. guy came up to me. "I'm sorry," he said. "Rick Sandoval [a *Herald* business reporter] just called. The paper's been closed."

I walked out in shock in the middle of Carter's speech. The fifteen minutes I had to wait for my car were the longest in my life. Everyone who was out on stories said the same thing — even though they knew nothing could be done, they felt as though they had to rush to the bedside of a dying relative.

When I got to our parking lot, the first person I saw was an editor who looked at me and just said, "It's over," and got into her car. I ran into the building and burst into tears. People were walking around in shock. This was it. Tomorrow the final edition of the *Herald* would come out, and after 118 years, there would be silence.

Reporters and photographers from all the other papers and the wire services



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Maxwell McCrohon, editor, and John J. McCabe, chief operating executive, in their November 2 front-page farewell

rushed in. There was sympathy and sincere regret on their faces, but for them it's just another story. For us, it felt like the end of our world. And it certainly is the end of a way of life.

The Hearst folks held a press conference down in our lobby, with tons of

television crews. Someone who had been at another closed newspaper told me the first few days would be a mixture of sadness, panic, and excitement at being the center of a news story. Many of us were interviewed and calls started pouring in from around the country. All afternoon, the phone lines went down briefly as they overloaded.

Almost immediately, newspapers around the country and the state faxed and called in their condolences and lists of job openings. *The Orange County Register* sent two editors down immediately to talk to reporters at Corky's [a local bar]. It was surrealistic, but welcome; it helped alleviate the onset of panic and kept our minds off the death in our midst.

Then we had to put out the last edition. We took a group shot in front of the famous Herald building. Then, ten minutes later, we had to go down to take another one because some editors weren't in it. Typical *Herald*.

Alina Tugend

Alina Tugend now covers the environment for *The Orange County Register*.



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ON THE
JOB

A TOOL FOR DIGGING (COURTESY OF THE IRS)

BY MARK I. PINSKY

Civic leaders in Orange County — a staunchly conservative part of southern California — are justifiably proud of their \$73 million Performing Arts Center, built with private funds and run with no government money. And, in a community sensitive about its cultural image, center officials are usually cooperative with the press, hoping for favorable news, feature coverage and, of course, favorable reviews of its productions. When inquiries touch on problems or controversies involving the center, however, the same officials get lockjaw, reminding reporters that, since the institution is private, they are not obliged to provide any information.

Well, that's just not so. Thanks to a little-noticed congressional action, all that I had to do last summer to report on the sensitive issue of the hefty salaries paid to the center's top administrators was to drive to Costa Mesa, walk in under the center's red Swedish-granite arch, and ask to see the tax-exempt institution's most recent Internal Revenue Service Form 990. A quick perusal indicated that the center's president, former *Washington Post* Style editor Thomas R. Kendrick, was paid \$184,246 in 1988, plus \$6,543 in benefits. General manager Judith Morr,

Kendrick's wife and former Kennedy Center colleague, earned \$108,678 that year, plus \$3,749 in benefits. Individually and together, the couple's compensation put them just behind the top two administrators at New York's Lincoln Center, as was made clear in my survey of multi-purpose arts facilities around the country in the *Los Angeles Times*'s Orange County edition.

Congress first required tax-exempt organizations to file information about their finances in 1942. More recently, the IRS set \$25,000 in gross annual receipts as the minimum for organizations required to file 990s, at the same time extending the filing requirement to foreign organizations that do business in the U.S. These nonprofit 501 (c) corporations, as they are known, include tax-exempt arts, educational, charitable, and public-interest organizations prohibited from engaging in political activity, contributions to which are tax-deductible; social welfare, civic, and employee organizations that are permitted to lobby for legislation; public-interest law firms; and certain other nonprofit labor, business, trade, and recreational groups. Nonexempt charitable trusts, technically 4947 (a) 1 corporations, also file 990s; private foundations are required to file a similar form, 990-PF, and to publish a legal notice announcing the availability of the form for inspection.

Early on, journalists saw the value in the document, recognizing that people were less likely to lie to the IRS than to the press. In the early 1970s, the *Sun Newspapers* of Omaha used Boys Town's 990s to help win a Pulitzer (see "Boys Town: An Exposé Without Bad Guys," *CJR*, January/February 1975). Back then, while copies of 990s were available from the IRS upon receipt of a written request to regional offices, responses took a minimum of six weeks and waits of six months or longer were not uncommon. The Omnibus Budget Reconciliation Act of 1987, however, made it mandatory for tax-exempt institutions to keep their most recent 990s on the premises of their principal place of business, beginning in May 1988, and to make them available upon request and to keep them on file for three years. The forms must also be available at any regional or district office of the filing organization where at least three people are

employed. Always an invaluable reporter's tool, the 990 was thus made more accessible for deadline stories. *The Chronicle of Higher Education* showed how the new regulations could be put to use in an article in the September 13, 1989, issue that detailed the compensation of highly paid administrators at twenty-five private universities, a report that was picked up by *The New York Times*, among other news organizations.

While IRS regulations state that organizations do not have to provide visitors with photocopies, they "must allow the requester to take notes freely during the inspection or must allow the requester to photocopy the document on the requester's own photocopying equipment within reasonable constraints of time and place." New, hand-held copiers make such copying possible.

If an exempt organization refuses to allow inspection of its 990 forms, it is subject to a fine of \$10 a day, up to \$5,000; any individual who "willfully" fails to comply is subject to an additional \$1,000 fine. Many institutions seem only dimly aware of their obligations, however. My initial requests to view the 990s for stories on local religious broad-

◆
**One finds the sort
of information most
organizations
would otherwise be
reluctant to supply**
◆

casters, for example, frequently met with blank stares, refusals, and, finally, calls up the organizational line. To avoid meeting with a similar reception, reporters would be well-advised to make an explanatory call in advance.

Using the current 990 is pretty simple, even for those not used to perusing financial documents. The first page of the form itemizes revenue, including the amount of direct and indirect public support and government grants, and expenses, including the cost of fundraising; it also provides a current balance of funds. The second page lists so-called functional expenses, including aggregate salaries and professional fund-raising

Mark I. Pinsky is a reporter for the *Los Angeles Times*'s Orange County Edition.

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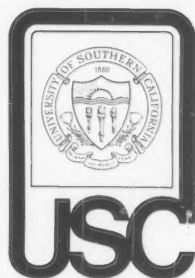
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ing fees and the cost of meetings and conferences. Page three lists, among other things, loans from officers, directors, trustees, and key employees.

On subsequent pages one finds the sort of information most organizations would otherwise be very reluctant to supply — for example, the names and addresses of all officers and board members, along with their compensation, hours per week of work, and expenses. (The same information is provided for the five highest-paid employees.) Organizations are not required to list the names of contributors for public inspection, but they do have to list their own investments.

There are several fairly sizable holes in the 990s net. Public (as opposed to private) universities and some tax-exempt religious organizations, such as churches or organizations that are considered integrated church auxiliaries, generally do not have to file with the IRS, even though they are considered 501 (c) corporations. (Religious organizations that own or control largely separate operations — radio and television stations, for example — do have to file for those subsidiaries, however.) There

is also a time lag: organizations have until the fifteenth day of the fifth month following the reporting period to file the form — May 15, for example, for organizations that operate on the calendar year. In addition, since extensions for filing are relatively easy to come by, it is not unusual for figures available for inspection to be several months old.

From a journalist's point of view, the greatest drawback of the present set-up is that, in most cases, you have to physically present yourself to see the material. In some states, though — California and New York, for example — copies of 990s are filed with the charities division of the secretary of state's office, and officials there will often respond to telephone requests. For a nominal fee, they may be willing to send or fax photocopies of a complete file. The Better Business Bureaus in a number of cities keep copies on file and may also be willing to provide information over the phone, by fax, or by mail.

The IRS is now in the process of revising the 990 for next year, and it has invited public comment. Under one proposal being considered, 501 (c) 3 cor-

porations with less than \$100,000 in gross yearly receipts and a year-end book value of under \$500,000 would be permitted to file a new, two-page 990-EZ form. It would still include a simplified balance sheet and a listing of officers, directors, and trustees and their compensation but would not provide information about employee salaries.

The IRS is almost certain to add to the standard 990 form a page dealing with income-producing activities. "There was very strong congressional interest that we do that," says IRS spokesman Wilson Fadely, who attributes this interest to the recent televangelism scandals. The new page would focus on transfers of cash and assets and on the sale of assets to nonprofit, for-profit, and political organizations.

A final word: the 990 is the beginning of a story, not the end. As is the case with an audit or an annual report, a lot of key information can be disguised in the form's numbers. But the form — with its wealth of concrete information, names, addresses, and figures — provides reporters with critical leverage and is therefore a great place to start. ♦

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CAPITAL LETTER

THE ACCIDENTAL JOURNALIST

BY WILLIAM BOOT

Some years back, a story circulated that Bob Woodward, with a perfectly straight face, had said he saw no reason why a team of dedicated investigative reporters could not discover a cure for cancer. Woodward was known to have an expansive notion of journalism's capabilities — "he thinks you can do virtually anything," according to his erstwhile co-author, Scott Armstrong — but the cancer tale proved to be apocryphal. Even so, I've been tantalized ever since by this vision of near-limitless horizons for journalists and have spent many an hour considering what might be possible, armed with just a notepad and some experience pounding a newsbeat, if only one dared to be great: **WORLD'S FIRST BRAIN TRANSPLANT PERFORMED BY SEATTLE REPORTER; TIME'S SIDEY TESTS STEALTH FIGHTER LIMITS IN DARING SOLO; "Do people have free will? News Seven's Insight Team has found the answer. Film at 11."**

Intriguingly, there is one area in which journalists actually do attempt feats that are nearly this ambitious. I refer to the coverage of major airline accidents.

The National Transportation Safety Board's highly trained investigators in Washington frequently require a year or more to determine the causes of these mishaps, which tend to be very compli-

cated, technical, and hard to trace (at times involving freakish multiple failures of safety back-up systems). Yet journalists, facing deadline pressure and editors' demands, often feel pressed to "solve" the mystery of a crash on the very day it happens, in time for the next edition or broadcast, or as soon thereafter as possible, before the public loses interest. Sad to say, the results of their reporting are often about as satisfactory as those one might expect from a brain operation performed by William Boot. Journalists working under high pressure without access to the flight data and voice recorders or pilot interviews that the NTSB generally has available within a few days are decidedly accident-prone.

Aviation experts here in Washington, from the independent NTSB to interest groups such as the Air Line Pilots Association (ALPA) and Air Transport Association, have been shaking their heads over inaccuracies in air accident coverage for years, as I learned not long ago after being assigned to cover a crash on takeoff at LaGuardia Airport in New York. An NTSB team is still investigating that mishap, in which the pilot aborted the takeoff of USAir flight 50-50, a Boeing 737 which skidded off the runway into the East River, breaking into pieces and killing two passengers. But, in keeping with a long tradition, reporters covering the September 20 crackup grasped for quick "explanations," many of which proved to be misleading, incomplete, or flatly wrong, as for instance:

- The "crazed pilot" thesis. News outlets including *The New York Times*, *The Associated Press*, and *CBS* reported that the pilot, Michael Martin, was "mumbling" and "irrational" prior to takeoff. The source of this yarn was co-pilot Constantine Kleissas, who later said his remarks had been misconstrued and Martin had not been behaving at all oddly.

- The "fugitive pilot" account, another human-error explanation. Two days after the crash, news organizations reported that the pilot and co-pilot had disappeared. The headlines and lead paragraphs almost certainly led audiences to infer that the crew was on the run and probably culpable in the crash. LEAVING THE SCENE OF AN ACCIDENT was how the *New York Daily News* put

it (September 23). *The New York Times* reported in its lead front-page story that Martin and Kleissas were "unavailable without explanation" . . . OFFICIALS SAY CAPTAIN LEFT SCENE AFTER ACCIDENT. *Newsday* announced: PILOTS DUCK CRASH PROBE . . . "Investigators were trying to determine yesterday why the pilot . . . disappeared from the crash scene shortly after the plane tumbled from the LaGuardia runway . . ." *The New York Post* declared: HIT & RUN . . . PILOT GOES AWOL . . . "The pilot . . . has dropped out of sight and is refusing to cooperate with investigators." (All September 22).

In fact, there was nothing at all remarkable about the pilots absenting themselves, once they had helped with the rescue of passengers, which they did. (Sixty-one passengers and crew survived.) According to Ted Lopatkiewicz, a spokesman in the NTSB's Washington



CJR/Nicolas Asci

headquarters, it is standard practice, and quite legal, for pilots to leave a crash scene and consult attorneys before answering questions from investigators. Even the pilots who brought a disabled United DC-10 in to a crash-landing in Sioux City last summer, and were instantly declared heroes, talked to their lawyers before seeing investigators, according to ALPA. (The FAA suspended the USAir pilots' licenses and blasted the two men for delaying taking alcohol and drug tests, which were not mandatory at the time. ALPA says they took the tests "in a timely fashion.")

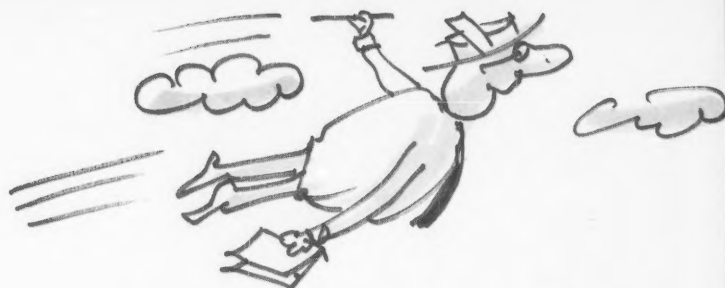
- The wrong-button story. On September 23, the news media's fickle finger of

William Boot is the pen name of Christopher Hanson, a former Washington Star and Reuters reporter who is now Washington correspondent for the Seattle Post-Intelligencer.

blame swung away from Captain Martin but toward co-pilot Kleissas. Newspapers strongly implied that he caused the crackup by pressing the wrong cockpit switch. *The Washington Post's* lead paragraph said: "[He] inadvertently hit the wrong controls . . . prompting the pilot to abort." *Newsday* reported: FEDS: THE CREW REALLY BLEW IT "[Kleissas] inadvertently pushed a button that caused the 737 to decelerate." A nearly identical AP lead was carried in papers around the world. My own opening paragraph was also along these lines. Kleissas was cast in our accounts as a kind of Captain Peter Peachfuzz, the error-prone officer in the old *Bullwinkle* TV cartoon series who, in one oft-shown episode, idiotically hits the "reverse" button on a control panel, causing a remote-controlled vehicle driving in "forward" to rip in two.

The "button" stories came from a news briefing by acting NTSB chairman James Kolstad, who mentioned among many other facts that Kleissas had hit the wrong switch, disengaging the auto-throttle and requiring Captain Martin to move the throttle manually. Kolstad

CURRICULAE AECU



drew no inferences about crash causes, but it was late at night, near deadline, and reporters were desperate for a lead. They dashed for the phones, the phrase "wrong button" on many a lip.

Next morning came a day of reckoning. NTSB officials, objecting to the coverage, said the co-pilot's error had, at worst, probably been only a momentary distraction during the takeoff. They pointed out that Kolstad never said the co-pilot's error had contributed to the crash in any way, nor had he ruled out mechanical error as the ultimate cause. Oops. It seems, in retrospect, that it was we reporters, not Kleissas, who most re-

sembled Captain Peachfuzz, whose trademark was to do the exact opposite of what a prudent and sensible person would in any given set of circumstances. A pamphlet called "Air Accidents & The News Media" (published by the Aviation/Space Writers Association) sets out all the prudent and sensible precautions a crash reporter should take. "Don't jump to conclusions," it says. But we did. "Avoid oversimplification," it implores. We did not. "Attribute statements and conclusions," it advises. If we had done this more carefully, we would have realized that Kolstad had drawn no conclusions regarding

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the cause of the crash. NTSB officials never do at such an early stage in the investigation.

●The DWI explanation. A huge headline in the September 27 *New York Post* declared: CRASH PILOTS MAY HAVE BEEN DRINKING. The story cited police sources, who, in turn, cited an informant who supposedly said he'd been out "bouncing" with the pilot and co-pilot. The report continued: "Investigators believe Martin and Kleissas may have spent as many as five hours of their six-hour layover in LaGuardia area bars." Patricia Goldman, a USAir senior vice president who heads the line's public relations office in suburban Washington, said she told the paper's reporters before publication that the story was flatly wrong, the crew's movements were accounted for and they had been in no fixed location for five hours on the crash day. Despite that warning, the *Post* went with the article, which was picked up by television, radio, and the wires and spread around the world. "When we heard about that story we knew it was false," says the NTSB's Lopatkiewicz. "I spent all day discounting it and the next day

it disappeared." But not before some heavy damage was done to the pilots' reputations.

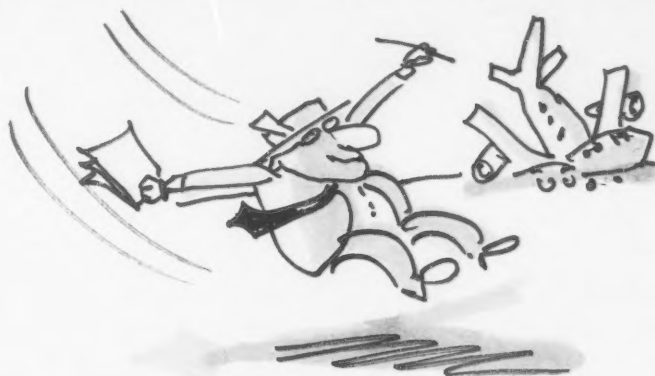
(As the crash news disappeared into the back pages, reporters took up the theory that an improperly set rudder switch may have caused the plane to swerve, prompting the effort to abort, a thesis the NTSB said it was probing.)

Coverage of the USAir crash was not an isolated example of reporters leaping to conclusions to "explain" a crash, nor was it the most flagrant case on record. That probably came in August 1987,

when a Northwest Airlines plane went down in Detroit just seconds after take-off, killing over 150. In the course of just a few days, reporters grabbed at evidence to support one theory after another, blowing sketchy information out of proportion, then reversing themselves to race on to the next explanation — a phenomenon which aviation experts call "cause du jour" journalism.

First came the prominently displayed articles on engine failure, many based on eyewitness accounts of flames billowing from one engine before the crash —

CJ/Nicolas Asciu



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Baltimore *Sun*, Knight-Ridder (both August 18) and *Detroit Free Press* (August 19). But investigators immediately began raising doubts about a pre-crash engine problem.

Then there was the sabotage thesis, based in part on reports that disgruntled employees had vandalized equipment in the past and might have tampered with the plane. (See *USA Today*, August 17: "Seconds after takeoff, left engine explodes and plane crashes. . . . FBI agents were sent to check reports [of sabotage].") Investigators quickly scotched the sabotage account. Next was the weather theory, as in WIND-SHEAR WARNING WAS ISSUED (*Detroit Free Press*, lead headline, stripped across top of page one, August 19). Wind-shear, too, was quickly played down by investigators. At last, on August 20, news organizations hit upon the explanation that officials probing the crash ultimately accepted: the plane's wing flaps were not extended prior to takeoff. I guess this all goes to show that if you fire enough rounds you might eventually be lucky enough to hit a target.

There are plenty of other, less egregious examples of questionable accident coverage. For example, when a plane crashes, newspapers frequently will print a list of earlier mishaps involving the same make of aircraft — a feeble stab at explaining what might have happened before anyone knows if there is any linkage between past mishaps and the crash in question. Thus, when a French UTA DC-10 disappeared over Africa last fall, the *Washington Post* account (September 20, 1989) mentioned an earlier DC-10 crash in Sioux City that had been traced to a faulty engine disk. That article was twinned with an account of how the FAA had been ordering tests of DC-10 engine disks to probe for flaws. The wisdom of this emphasis on engine flaws was almost immediately shown to be lacking when the French government announced that a bomb had destroyed the aircraft.

When Pan Am Flight 103 went down in Lockerbie, Scotland, *The New York Times* (December 24, 1988) reported that mechanical and structural flaws could have caused the Boeing 747 to break apart in midair. The sources were sound, but evidence that a bomb had destroyed the plane quickly became so

overwhelming that the paper's editors may eventually have regretted devoting an entire article to the non-bomb theory.

Journalists are reputed to be a skeptical lot. Why, then, do those assigned to air accidents so often give credence to half-baked theories? In many cases, the reason may be inexperience. Each

Crash reporters draw sweeping inferences from sketchy information; the resemblance to reality is marginal

crash is a big local news event, drawing dozens or hundreds of newpeople who have never covered aviation before and are unfamiliar with the pitfalls of accident reporting. "They might have been covering the opening of a shopping mall the day before, they don't have the background, and of course the first thing they want to do is find out what caused the accident," says Lopatkiewicz.

A second reason is that rivalry can breed recklessness — the more intensely news organizations fight for a story, the greater the likelihood that reporters and editors will hype up that day's information to out-dazzle the opposition. (The *Detroit News-Free Press* circulation war may thus have been a factor in the excesses of the Northwest crash coverage.) Lopatkiewicz says that with the expansion of satellite and cable hook-ups, the number of TV crews pitted against each other in accident coverage has surged. He counted thirty-six camera crews at one recent briefing following an accident in Sioux City, called simply to announce that the investigating team had arrived.

A third reason may be that crash reporters feel so driven to assuage the reader's curiosity, to provide what Paul Harvey calls "the rest of the story," that they lose sight of the need to base a report on solid information and will settle for supposition. Lopatkiewicz recalls a young reporter who stormed up to an NTSB official in Hawaii after a briefing on an accident in which an airliner's

cargo door blew off, killing nine (February 24, 1989). The reporter castigated the NTSB for refusing to speculate on what caused the crash, as if the board were depriving the public of some inalienable right to official surmise and conjecture. ("We don't have the responsibility to speculate, we have the responsibility not to speculate," notes Lopatkiewicz.)

In some respects, reporters faced with paltry data on what caused an accident confront pressures akin to those that bedeviled sportswriters on the old *Paris Tribune*, as described by William Shirer in his memoir, *20th Century Journey*. The paper's American readers wanted vivid, play-by-play narrations of college football games, but the only information the sportswriters could get was a meager ticker report on the score after each quarter. What to do? They simply conjured up entire games to fit the scores, "great end runs, off-tackle smashes, forward passes, blocked punts, and spectacular drop kicks. . . ." Crash reporters do not resort to fiction (with possible exceptions — see 1950's AIRLINER LANDS WITH 97 SKELETONS ON BOARD, *Weekly World News*, November 14, 1989), but at times they draw such sweeping inferences from such sketchy information, in order to fill the gaps in their own narrations, that the resemblance to reality is marginal. Facts mutate into "factoids" — assertions with an element of truth that grow quasi-fictional through distortion.



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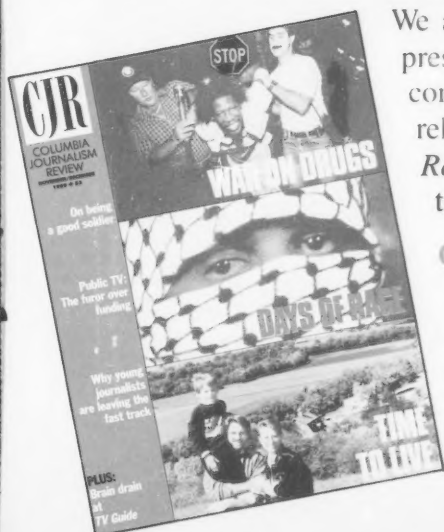
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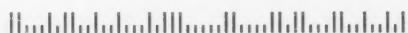
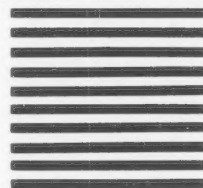
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It would, of course, be wiser if journalists covering crashes simply followed the admonition made famous by Sergeant Joe Friday of *Dragnet*: Just the facts, Ma'am. After all, simply getting the basic facts straight can be difficult enough in the chaos following a crash. Robert Serling, a veteran aviation writer, recalls a United Press lead years ago reporting that a "twin engine, DC-8 Super Constellation" had made an emergency landing in Florida. In fact, a DC-8 is not twin-engined — it has four. What's more, a DC-8 is not a Super Constellation, which has piston engines, while the former is jet-powered. Furthermore, the aircraft in question was neither a DC-8 nor a Super Constellation, according to Serling; it was a Convair 540 prop jet. The plane *had* made an emergency landing in Florida, which gave the wires some reason to be thankful. According to *Facts on File*, The Associated Press once reported that a plane had arrived safely at an airfield in northern Rhodesia (September 18, 1961) — UN Secretary General Dag Hammarskjöld's flight, to be precise. Embarrassingly enough, the plane had actually crashed, killing Hammarskjöld and fourteen others. Following the USAir accident, newspapers across the country, including *The New York Times* (page one), the *Los Angeles Times*, and the *Chicago Tribune* ran photos taken on the runway of a man in a pilot's uniform, identified in captions as Captain Michael Martin. It was not Martin. It was in fact a Pan Am pilot who just happened to be riding on the plane. New York *Newsday* avoided that particular pilot error. Instead it ran a front-page photo of ALPA attorney James Johnson, with this caption: "Pilot Michael W. Martin arrives last night at Jamaica Hospital."

Many mistakes of this type result from incautious reliance on eyewitnesses, who, as the pamphlet on crash coverage points out, are frequently "untrained observers who may not know what they are looking at." Eyewitnesses have been known to misidentify people, to report what never happened (the phantom engine fire in the Northwest crash), and to provide less-than-helpful descriptions. Here, for instance, is how one New York police officer involved in the LaGuardia rescue described the scene to me: "It was utter chaos. It was eerily calm." His

partner tried to amplify: "It was pretty calm, except there was a lot of screaming."

A final warning to crash reporters: the stress of covering an air accident may temporarily affect the journalists' brain functions, including the capacity to take in basic information. For example, at the start of one NTSB briefing on the USAir mishap, Lopatkiewicz announced that acting chairman Kolstad's name was spelled K-o-l-s-t-a-d. As I recall, one of the first questions was: "Mr. Kolstad! Can we have the spelling of your name?" The spelling was given again.

Before the gathering broke up, that question had been asked and answered several more times. Even so, a reporter for one major wire service opted to spell the name "Kholstad," suggesting that his natural skepticism about official versions had run amok, possibly as a result of too much adrenalin in the system. This example should not cause practicing journalists undue alarm. In most cases, such a problem can be corrected by deep breathing or visualization exercises, combined with a mild sedative. But if the condition persists, be sure to consult your physician. ♦

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DARTS AND LAURELS

◆ **DART** to *The Cincinnati Enquirer*, for scandalous editing. The paper picked up *The New York Times*'s October 27 story on congressional testimony by federal regulators that senior officials at Lincoln Savings and Loan Association had used wiretapping, political pressure, and other inducements to avoid government action against the institution — but not before deleting any and all mention of Charles H. Keating, Jr., Lincoln's principal owner. As recently revealed by the *St. Petersburg Times*, the reason for the paper's nonaggressive handling of the \$2 billion debacle may have something to do with family ties: the chairman of the Gannett-owned *Enquirer* is Keating's brother, William. (A former Lincoln director, William Keating has been accused by the government of negligence and breach of fiduciary duty in the case.)

◆ **DART** to WNEV-TV, the CBS affiliate in Boston, for (relatively) unprofessional coverage of the California earthquake. Just as the network was airing its first feed from KPIX in San Francisco, an interview with an eyewitness to the collapse of the Bay Bridge roadway — and only minutes after anchorman Dan Rather had relayed a Civil Defense Department plea that the public refrain from making calls to and from the devastated region in order to keep the few operating phone lines open for emergencies — Boston anchor R.D. Sahl interrupted the transmission for a telephone interview with a Bay area resident who happened to be his brother. As noted by *The Boston Phoenix*, R.D.'s sibling had little news to offer, beyond, of course, the fact that he was okay. "He was at home, in the dark, cleaning up his kitchen," the *Phoenix* reported, "and monitoring the KPIX report that Bostonians would have been getting if the Brothers Sahl hadn't been hogging the tube."

◆ **DART** to the *Las Vegas Review-Journal*, for black-jacking the news. In its morning edition of September 19, the paper ran a straightforward story on the background and status of the pending proposal for a joint operating agreement between the *Review-Journal* and the *Las Vegas Sun*, making no bones about the obstacles raised by the adamant refusal of the Donrey Media Group, the *Review-Journal*'s owner, to lay out all of its advertising and circulation cards on the Justice Department's table. But by the time the afternoon edition rolled around, Donrey had issued new house rules for JOA coverage, and the story was wiped out.

◆ **DART** to the *Houston Chronicle*, for adding the insult of a lie to the injury of a truth. Departing from the Houston media's unwritten rule not to publicize the exact address of Mayor Kathy Whitmire's private — and unguarded — home, the *Chronicle* in its early editions of

September 21 ran an eight-by-six-inch photo of what it identified as Whitmire's corner house — and in which the names of the intersecting streets were partly visible on the curb. (The news/amusement value of the photo was in a campaign sign for the incumbent's opponent which, according to the caption, had been placed by a prankster in front of her house.) Having apparently been alerted to its lapse, the paper in later editions responded not by dropping the picture but by inserting information in its caption that was simply not true. "A neighbor bicycles past a house in the Heights on Wednesday and may wonder at the Hofheinz campaign sign," it illogically explained. "A prankster added the sign, since Fred Hofheinz is opposing Whitmire in the November 7 mayoral race. In earlier editions of the *Chronicle*, the house was erroneously described as that of Mayor Kathy Whitmire."

◆ **LAUREL** to *Washington Jewish Week* and staff writer Larry Cohler, for an unsettling analysis of the ambiguous relationship between the Grand Old Party and David Duke, the former Imperial Wizard of the Ku Klux Klan who last year was elected as a Republican to Louisiana's House of Representatives. Cohler's reports (which began August 10) point up several telling contrasts — on the one hand, for example, the public perception that Duke has reformed; on the other, the neo-Nazi books on sale at his district office and his continuing ties to the National Association of the Advancement of White People. The articles also point up the contrast between the Republican National Committee's formal disavowal of Duke after his election, and the range of attitudes prevailing at the state party level, from tactical silence

(now endorsed by national chairman Lee Atwater) to outright embrace. One possible explanation: in a recent confidential questionnaire sent out by the state party to its rank and file contributors, the favorite candidate for U.S. Senate — by a landslide — turned out to be Duke.

◆ **DART** to the National Association of Farm Broadcasters, for its overcultivation of sources in the agricultural field. A look at the group's recent newsletters yields the news that the NAFB received a "professional improvement grant" from Pioneer Hi-Bred International, an Iowa seed



1975



1987

company, to provide each of its 175 members with a snazzy equipment bag; that the NAFB's annual conventions are abundantly subsidized by such interested companies as R.J.R. Nabisco, Philip Morris, and Dow, as well as by such interested organizations as those promoting peanuts, poultry, and pork; and that the broadcasters are being exhorted by their association's president to "make sure . . . we get our rightful share of farm advertising dollars." (And thanks to *Milwaukee Journal* reporter Michael Zahn, whose September 24 column documented all of the above, and more.)

◆ **DART** to WRGB-TV, Schenectady, New York, and reporter Dan DiNicola, for the less than divine revelation that one John Koletas, a Baptist preacher who had been acquitted of disorderly conduct for thumping his Bible too loudly on a local street, was back at the same old stand. As the *Albany Times-Union* later observed, Koletas was simply complying with DiNicola's request to repeat the performance that had led to his arrest.

◆ **DART** to *The Sacramento Bee*, for its honeyed coverage of local efforts to lure the Los Angeles Raiders football team to Sacramento. Not only did the paper's executive editor, Gregory Favre, take part in discussions with members of a stadium-development group and with Raiders owner Al Davis, but he also kept the *Bee* from pursuing the scent of the \$50 million deal for a crucial three weeks, during which time the developers were able to quietly gather the support of local politicians. Moreover, as detailed in ombudsman Art Nauman's September 3 column, the paper sweetened a couple of rather significant reports. The first, a front-page story (Sunday, August 20), headed RAIDERS PUT DOLLAR SIGNS IN CITY'S EYES, played up the \$1.6 billion benefit that the Raiders's migration would bring to the Sacramento economy — but subordinated the news that it would also bring an increase in the public's taxes. The second, a front-page story on Sunday, August 27, obfuscated the results of a public opinion poll that purported to measure support for the Raiders' move: the "overwhelmingly positive" feeling of "63 percent," Nauman observed, would more accurately have been reported at 42 percent had a crucial question — namely, the willingness to pay an extra 5 percent ticket tax — been taken into account. Although in subsequent stories the paper did address some negative aspects of the plan, it never landed on a recent study (noted by Thomas W. Hazlett in the September 14 *Wall Street Journal*) which found that, of fourteen baseball and football stadiums around the country, "only one was producing a positive flow into city coffers. The total net present value of the burden on local taxpayers for all fourteen," Hazlett reported, "came to \$136 million."

◆ **LAUREL** to the Minneapolis *Star Tribune* and staff writers Lou Kilzer and Chris Ison, for "Fire in St. Paul," a searing probe of the multimillion-dollar "culture of arson"



Don Button and Jeff Nicholson.
Sacramento News & Review

that flourishes in that city. Based on a computer-assisted analysis of fire reports, police reports, court records, land records, bank records, building permits, and financial statements, as well as on interviews with fire officials, police investigators, fire victims, adjusters, insurance industry experts, and known and suspected arsonists, the *Star Tribune* stories (October 29-30) documented an alarming pattern of suspicious fires, sloppy investigations, and fraudulent insurance claims. At the center of the action: a public adjuster whose firm was financed by the fire chief and who steers lucrative insurance-covered fire-repair jobs to a construction company run by the fire chief's brother. The report also revealed that an unusually large number of friends and business associates of the fire chief and his brother have suffered an unusually large number of fires.

◆ **DART** to NBC's *Today* show, for proving that conflict-of-interest fears raised when General Electric bought NBC were well-founded, after all. According to the December 3 *New York Times*, prior to broadcasting an investigative report on dangerously substandard bolts by Peter Karl of WMAQ, NBC's owned and operated station in Chicago, *Today* executive producer Marty Ryan deleted an exclusive, documented, and confirmed statement to the effect that, for the past eight years GE had been making jet engines with untested — and sometimes defective — bolts. (Two weeks after *The New York Times*'s story appeared, the *Today* show ran a follow-up segment that included references to General Electric that had been excised from Karl's original report.) Not surprisingly, it was from ABC, not NBC, that viewers learned, in an unrelated story on *Prime Time Live*, of the futile attempts by a GE whistle-blower to persuade the company to deal with serious problems affecting workers' health.

◆ **DART** to the Cherry Hill, New Jersey, *Courier-Post*, for an unprofessional readiness to suspend its disbelief. Passing up such circulation boosters as Bingo, Wingo, and similarly worldly games of chance, the *Courier-Post* conjured up instead a highly promoted Mystery Delivery Challenge, in which readers were asked to guess the time it would take for The Amazing Kreskin to mind-read his way to a pre-selected, secret home address (hidden away in a shopping mall vault) and deliver a copy of the *Courier-Post*. On the morning of October 2, when newspapers around the globe were bannerizing reports on the historic journey of thousands of East Germans into the West, the *Courier-Post* devoted more than 130 unskeptical column inches, thirty of them on page one, to The Amazing Kreskin's arrival at the mall, his nervous paces in preparation, his meeting with the judges, his reading of the "vibes," his study of the maps, and his boarding of the stretch limo that took him on his route toward what turned out to be (surprise!) the right address. The record of the itinerary also included a brief, mind-boggling stop for soda to assuage the mentalist's motion sickness.

This column is compiled and written by Gloria Cooper, CJR's managing editor, to whom nominations should be directed.



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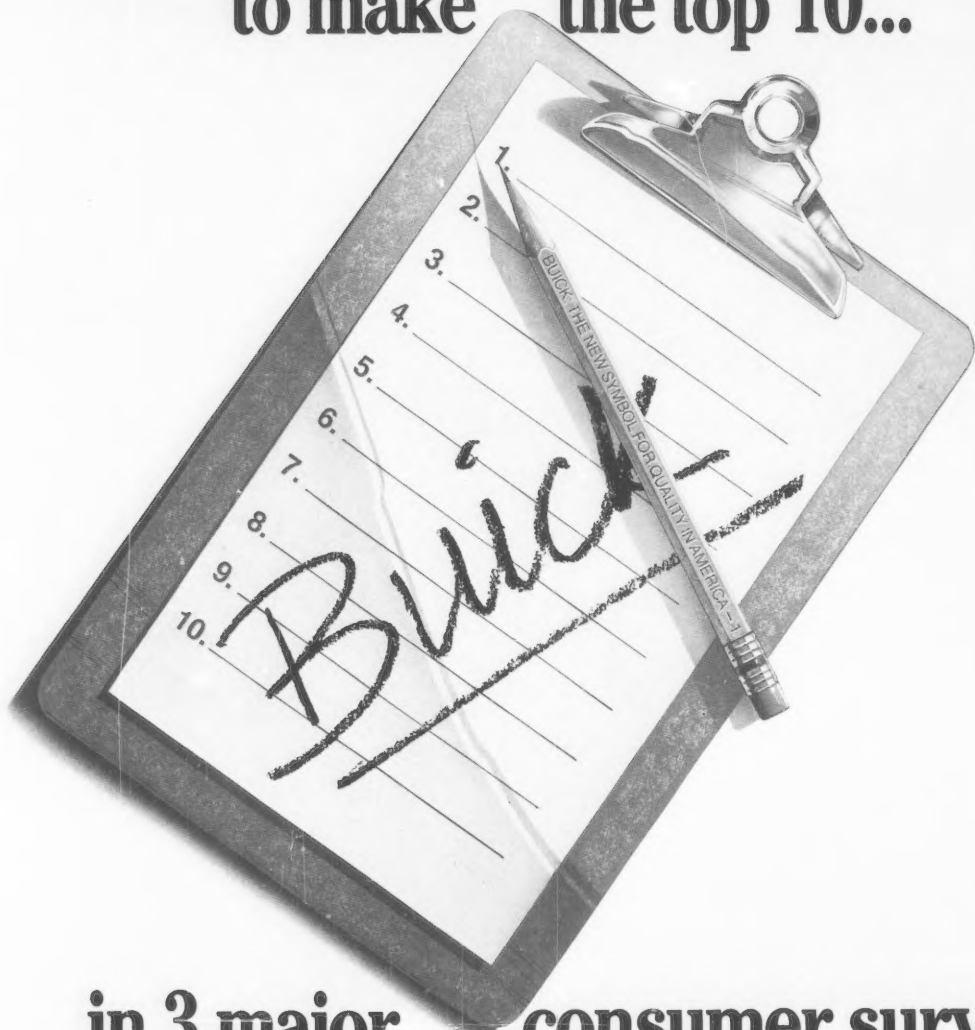
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MISSION: AFGHANISTAN

BY MARY WILLIAMS WALSH

It was mid-February 1989, and in Afghanistan the Soviet Army's stand-down was almost complete. For weeks, long columns of armored vehicles and canvas-topped trucks (right) had been crawling north from Kabul along the snowy road to Soviet Central Asia. As the withdrawal deadline approached, enormous jet transports took off for home with the last rear-guard units. To the east, across the border with Pakistan, scores of foreign journalists were camping out in hotels, waiting to see what would happen next.

A camera crew from CBS was on location with the U.S.-backed Afghan resistance, the mujahideen. The outlook was confused, but correspondent Anthony Mason was optimistic on the February 10 CBS Evening News. "The mujahideen commanders are more than ready to go on to Kabul," Mason said. And the camera moved in tight on an Afghan named Abdul Haq as he tapped out plans for victory on a personal computer, surrounded by impressive colored wall charts and order-of-battle maps.

Eye-catching visuals, stirring stuff — but was it an accurate portrayal of the facts, given the bloody stalemate in Afghanistan a year later?

Mary Williams Walsh is Toronto bureau chief of the *Los Angeles Times*. From 1983 through 1989, she worked at *The Wall Street Journal*, as a general assignment staff writer, as the paper's bureau chief in Mexico City, as a correspondent in South America, and, finally, as the *Journal's* principal correspondent in south and southeast Asia, covering Pakistan and Afghanistan between 1987 and 1989. She entered Afghanistan both legally, with a visa, and with the mujahideen.



Reuters/Bettmann

'I'm not a player, I am a reporter,' says Kurt Lohbeck. A lot of evidence suggests otherwise

This is the story of how a network contract reporter who knew his way around the rugged countryside in which a faraway war was being waged pursued an agenda of his own under the mantle of journalism. It is a story that may serve as a warning of what can happen at any news organization, particularly at a time when bottom-line pressures are forcing editors and producers to rely increasingly on personnel about whom they may know little and over whom they exercise little control. And it is a story that sheds light on the forces that left Americans with a poor understanding of the Soviet-Afghan war and this country's biggest covert action since CIA operations during the Vietnam war.

To be sure, there were brave and professional stringers and free-lancers who willingly endured countless difficulties in an effort to accurately report a war story complicated by murderous infighting among many guerrilla factions. A few found it hard to resist being caught up in this factionalism, however.

It was in 1987, seven years after the Soviets invaded Afghanistan, that CBS put Kurt Lohbeck on contract as a long-leash reporter and producer, its day-in-and-day-out eyes and ears on the war. Based in the Pakistani border city of Peshawar, he traveled into Afghanistan with the guerrillas, filmed their operations, and filed reports. On big stories, when CBS sent its staff correspondents to Peshawar — as when Mason came in for the Soviet withdrawal last February — Lohbeck helped to make arrangements for them.

"Kurt is, and was, the main Afghan source of material for CBS News over the years," says R.J. Halderman, a producer in the network's London bureau who has worked on Afghanistan reports with Lohbeck. "I can't think of many people we have a relationship with that's as strong as Kurt's is."

But Lohbeck was a partisan of the mujahideen and of one guerrilla leader in particular, Abdul Haq, for whom he served in effect as a publicist. Moreover, other reporters claim that he sought by various means to shape their coverage of the war. U.S. and Afghan sources say furthermore that, while he was on contract for CBS, Lohbeck set up a press conference for the guerrillas and coached them on how to address skeptical Western reporters. There is even evidence to suggest that he tried to help put together at least one weapons deal for the mujahideen. Finally, Lohbeck's past — which CBS apparently made no attempt to check up on — hardly recommended him (see sidebar, page 30).

How did CBS come to rely on such a man? CBS News executives have not responded to repeated requests for information about Lohbeck and his coverage of the war in Afghanistan. They were only slightly more forthcoming in

the case of free-lance cameraman Mike Hoover, recently accused of staging footage used by CBS (see box, page 32).

Without knowing all the facts, one can at least enumerate some of the factors that may have contributed to the network's decision to rely on an outsider like Kurt Lohbeck.

First, there was the sheer physical difficulty of getting staff crews into Afghanistan and working inside. Cameramen packing big loads of conspicuous high-tech equipment had to make risky, illegal border crossings and then walk for weeks over high mountain passes, all the while braving helicopter attacks and such hardships as wretched food and hepatitis. If the cameramen found anything worth filming, they were unable to feed it home instantaneously; all film had to be carried out again, either on foot or on horseback. To add to the frustrations of the assignment, the mujahideen would sometimes mount their attacks at night without bothering to awaken the foreign journalists who had trudged for weeks to be on hand for the action. British video journalist Aernout van Lynden summed up the situation: "No news organization wants to send someone into a war zone for six weeks and not hear anything. That's Afghanistan."

Cost was another factor — and, by chance, the Afghan war was being waged at a time when all three networks were trying to cut costs. Keeping a staff reporter on the ground in the world's trouble spots can be horrifically expensive; it is estimated that it can cost upwards of \$200,000 a year for a network to do so.

All three networks, therefore, were prepared, wherever possible, to rely on free-lancers — and in Afghanistan, they did. The difficulty of getting staff into the country contributed to the decision of most of the U.S. media not to cover the war from inside Afghanistan but from places like Islamabad, New Delhi, Washington, and Geneva, supplementing such nominal coverage by purchasing front-line footage from free-lancers and stringers.

At the same time, in the early 1980s, CBS was also dealing with problems caused by the drop in ratings following Dan Rather's replacement of Walter Cronkite as the network's anchor. But, to its credit, CBS pressed ahead with its coverage of the Afghan war even as the network cut back on its news staff. A 1988 study by the Congressional Research Service showed that year after year CBS devoted more air time to the war than did the other networks. In 1986, for instance, a high-water year for coverage, CBS aired 55.2 minutes of Afghan news, while NBC aired 28.8 minutes and ABC only 19.7 minutes.

Rather's admirers say the difference reflects his special interest in Afghanistan, from which he made a dramatic report in April 1980, nearly four years before Kurt Lohbeck arrived on his first visit to the border city of Peshawar.

These friends and supporters add that Rather believed the story was an important one — a huge nation invading an impoverished neighbor and toppling its government, then brutally imposing an alien and unpopular ideology on its people — and that it deserved far more media attention than most news organizations were giving it. Others, however, suggest another possibility — that, to counter criticism by conservative groups of the network's coverage of leftist insurgencies in Central America, Rather used the occasional Afghan story to demonstrate that he was not soft on the Soviets.

Whichever explanation proves to be the correct one — and they are not mutually exclusive — there can be no doubt about one thing: because of its special commitment to get a story in a land where it could not supervise a reporter, the network was left in a particularly vulnerable position.

Lohbeck's interest in Afghanistan dates back to 1983, when he formed a video-production company and made plans to film a documentary about Central America. Before setting off, however, he met a young woman, Anne Hurd, who was organizing a fund-raising event for the benefit of the mujahideen. Lohbeck took an interest in her, and in her cause. He made Hurd his production manager, boned up on Afghanistan, and, abandoning the Central America project, started raising funds to produce a film on the Afghan jihad, or holy war.

Hamed Naweed, an Afghan who taught art history in Kabul University before the war, remembers going to a Washington fund-raiser and listening to Lohbeck make his pitch. "He said he wanted to help Afghanistan through the media, because television is very powerful," Naweed recalls, adding that Lohbeck took up a collection and that most of the exiles present gave \$20 or \$30. "He said, 'You will see more and more pictures of Afghanistan on the screens.' And he kept his promise."

It was on the couple's first trip to Peshawar, in 1983, that Lohbeck and Hurd met Abdul Haq, the young and personable Afghan guerrilla who turned up on *The CBS Evening News* with his computer and maps in February 1989. Early in the war, Abdul Haq had made a name for himself as an urban guerrilla, credited with ambushing several Afghan communist party members and shooting down a large Soviet transport plane over the approaches to Kabul airport. But after the regime beefed up its troop presence in Kabul in the mid-1980s, says David Isby, the author of *War in a Distant Country*, a history of the Soviet-Afghan war, Abdul Haq found it harder to operate in the capital and decided to move to Peshawar and focus more on diplomatic and political work.

It was Abdul Haq — who spoke some English and was more tolerant of Western ways than many mujahideen — who helped arrange Lohbeck's maiden voyage into Afghanistan. On his return, Lohbeck gave Abdul Haq an op-

"Afghans give off positive vibes," says Lohbeck, shown here in Peshawar, where he lives.



portunity to speak at great length in a film he made, *Beyond the Khyber Pass*, portions of which were used by CBS.

Most reporters who wanted to get inside Afghanistan were compelled to form relationships of this kind, in which each party helped the other in some way. But owing, in part, to such relationships, reporters tended to present their warrior-hosts in a heroic light and to gloss over some of the grim facts of this calamitous war — the murderous infighting among the many mujahideen factions, the Afghans' cultivation of opium poppies in some of the regions under their control, and the people's resentment of U.S., Iranian, Pakistani, and Saudi manipulation of their plight.

One mujahideen faction well known for cooperating with Western journalists was the National Islamic Front of Afghanistan, or NIFA, a group with which controversial cameraman Mike Hoover worked closely. The party's leadership tended to be so well-heeled, so sophisticated and worldly that reporters in Peshawar dubbed them "the Gucci guerrillas." Unlike the simple peasant fighters of the popular

imagination, NIFA higher-ups knew plenty about the Western media and were well aware that a good many journalists yearned for the Afghan dateline but dreaded the violence and risks that getting it entailed. And NIFA leaders knew that still others were under tremendous deadline pressures and didn't have the time it took to walk deep into the country until they found what they wanted. Not that even a long trek was any guarantee of seeing action. As Chris Hooke, an Australian video journalist who lives in Peshawar and has covered the war at close range, observes, a lot of journalists "want to see tanks, shells, explosions, people dying," but "when you go into Afghanistan it's very hard to find combat."

NIFA and certain other guerrilla parties helped reporters get their coveted Afghan dateline by arranging for short, relatively painless trips over the border and back.

There was even once a heated debate among the various guerrilla factions over whether to deploy their foreign-supplied weapons deep inside Afghanistan — beyond the range

FLASHBACK

Kurt Lohbeck's pre-CBS résumé was, to say the least, colorful. He was born in St. Louis in 1942, reared in New Mexico, and in 1965 was convicted in Garden City, Kansas, of passing worthless checks and given a suspended thirty-day sentence. He later moved to El Paso, Texas, where he landed a job as news director of KTSM-TV. The station fired him before a year was up.

Lohbeck next moved to Albuquerque, where he had several brushes with the law. New Mexico permitted churches to raise money through bingo, and he and his father opened a bingo parlor in Albuquerque for the ostensible benefit of an institution called the Holy Orthodox Church. The church was a house trailer in which a self-styled "bishop," with robes, medallions, and a silver-tipped staff, officiated. The highly unorthodox bingo parlor attracted the attention of the press and of the city's vice squad, which raided the place twice and seized what authorities said were illegal gambling machines. A judge later dismissed the gambling charges. Police records show that at about this time, in 1977, a former bingo parlor employee complained that Lohbeck entered her home uninvited and roughed her up. According to a newspaper account, he was convicted and paid a \$50 fine.

Lohbeck's troubles with the law didn't end there. He next passed a bad check at a liquor store near the bingo parlor and, according to owner Johnny Barbieri, brandished a pistol when asked to make good. According to Barbieri, Lohbeck threatened to "blow [his] head off" if he asked again about the bad check. The dispute led to a trial in criminal court, where the prosecutor told the jury that Lohbeck had been passing worthless checks "all around town," and cited several dozen instances. The jury convicted Lohbeck of issuing worthless checks. "Well, Mr. Lohbeck, you've come to the end of your line," said the judge, and sentenced

him to one to three years in a minimum security prison.

But it wasn't the end of the line. Lohbeck served seven months of his sentence, was paroled, and in 1979 got a job at radio station KZIA, an ABC affiliate in Albuquerque. The station's then owner, John Deme, recalls Lohbeck as "a fantastic newsman" who "did a good job for us." Just a few months later, bloody rioting broke out in New Mexico's maximum-security prison, and ABC sent out a production crew to make a documentary. The network reporters were pleased to find a local newsman who knew the penitentiary system, literally, from the inside out, and they hired Lohbeck to work with them. It was a one-in-a-million break for an ex-offender: thanks in part to his own criminal record, Lohbeck was back in television.

When the project was over, he got a job as reporter and assignment editor at KGGM-TV in Albuquerque. His former supervisor, Arthur Aipert, recalls that Lohbeck "made everyone feel lousy" and was fired within a year. But this was late 1980 — the eve of the Reagan revolution, and thousands of conservatives from across America were flock-

Broadcaster's Appointment Upsets Valley Republicans

By ROBERT V. BEHR
Some Valley Republican leaders have expressed disapproval over the appointment of broadcaster Kurt Lohbeck to the House of Representatives from Dist. 14 in the South Valley.

And Lohbeck, who was named to the legislative assembly by a 21-1 vote of the County Commission Wednesday, said he was aware of the criticism over his appointment. "A lot of people are upset," he said. "There's a lot of hell being raised."

Lohbeck, who will replace the late Rep. Eugene Cinnelli, D-Bernalillo, said "all I can do is do a good job and all I've got 10 months to do it. I'm going to demonstrate I'm going to be the people I am going to start to see as many as I can."

Lohbeck was sworn in Thursday afternoon by Dist. 14 Judge Homer Sanchez.

At least two members of the Bernalillo County Republican Executive Committee, State Sen. Les Hsu and George Martinez, said they will remain their post.

Third, Harry Garcia, the appointment of Lohbeck, a Republican, but said he has planned to act for himself yet.

COUNTY CHAIRMAN Steve Davis said "I'll support Lohbeck in any way I can and like anybody else. It was a difficult decision to make and I don't envy the commissioners who made that decision."



Kurt Lohbeck
Courtesy

Lohbeck released from Penitentiary

Former state Rep. Kurt Lohbeck has been released from the State Penitentiary after serving about six months of a 1-to-3-year sentence for passing a worthless check.

Lohbeck has been hired as news director at KZIA Radio station to replace Mike Santullo who is taking over the news directorship at KQEO Radio.

PRIOR to his appointment to the legislative seat of the late state Rep. Eugene Cinnelli in 1973, Lohbeck was a radio newsman at KQEO Radio. Lohbeck lost his legislative seat in his first election bid to Cinnelli's widow, Rep. Adele Cinnelli Hundley, in 1974.

Lohbeck was convicted in September 1977 on issuing a worthless check to Rusty's San Mateo S.E.



Kurt Lohbeck
Released from prison



In 1980, Dan Rather, disguised in native dress, interviewed members of the mujahideen in Afghanistan. In its continuing commitment to the story, CBS increasingly leaned on Lohbeck.

ing to Washington to get in on the action. Lohbeck joined them.

As it happens, Lohbeck had grown up in a politically active household: his father, Don Lohbeck — a top aide and p.r. man for Gerald L.K. Smith, the famous rabble-rousing bigot of the 1940s — had edited an anti-black, Jew-baiting magazine called *The Cross and the Flag*, and tried to run for mayor of St. Louis on the Christian Nationalist party ticket. Son Kurt showed a penchant for politics, as well, once serving in the New Mexico legislature, having been named to fill the seat of a Republican who had died in office.

In Washington, Lohbeck landed a job on Capitol Hill with a House committee chaired by then Congressman Manuel Lujan of New Mexico. (Lujan is now secretary of the interior.) He wrote some of Lujan's speeches, attended functions with him, and even became an occasional poker buddy.

Before long, Lohbeck met a young, well-connected Washington woman and struck up a romance. He proposed marriage and the woman accepted. Within months, the woman came to Representative Lujan and accused Lohbeck of taking her credit card and making thousands of dollars worth of unauthorized charges around town. Lujan said recently through an Interior Department spokesman that he had urged Lohbeck to make good on whatever debts he had incurred. Later that year, Lohbeck left his job on the Hill; he was not fired, however, Lujan's spokesman said.

This reporter interviewed Lohbeck in person in Peshawar for more than an hour and later by telephone in the U.S., where he was recovering from ear injuries caused by an exploding tank round. Regarding the preceding material, he declined to comment in detail. When asked about his former fiancée's allegations, he said, "It's my personal life. It was years ago. It had nothing to do with [the coverage of Afghanistan]." Asked about Barbieri's allegation that he had threatened the liquor-store owner with a pistol, Lohbeck called the man "a pathological liar." Then he said that further conversation was pointless and hung up. M.W.W.

of all but the most intrepid reporters — or near the border, within easy access of Western reporters, who could photograph the weapons, get their datelines, and, unwittingly, help the guerrillas wage their war in the media. David Isby calls the latter approach "the war of the periphery."

Most journalists came and went. Lohbeck stayed and, as his career as a combat cameraman flourished, so did Abdul Haq's fame as a spokesman for the mujahideen. Time and again the articulate Afghan turned up on the air, first in free-lanced reports which Lohbeck sold to the different networks, and later in contract work for CBS.

In December 1984, for instance, at a time when the government was beginning to weigh the question of how best to arm the guerrillas, Lohbeck featured Abdul Haq in a piece aired on ABC in which the Afghan complained that "during the five-year war with the Soviet Union in Afghanistan" the U.S. had done "nothing" for the mujahideen. In fact, U.S. appropriations to the guerrillas for 1984 alone are estimated at \$140 million.

In 1985, at the time of the Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Geneva, Abdul Haq again appeared on the air as a spokesman for the mujahideen, asserting on *The CBS Evening News* that the war was intensifying under the new Soviet leader. The same year, Abdul Haq turned up in Washington for a Conservative Political Action Conference banquet held to honor anticommunist insurgents in the third world, and was singled out for personal recognition by President Reagan while Lohbeck beamed in the audience. Lohbeck later wrote master of ceremonies Robert Dolan a thank-you note for having helped to obtain the presidential recognition for the guerrilla. "Following our private meetings at the White House," he wrote, "it gave Abdul and his people renewed encouragement."

Two years later, by which time Lohbeck was working under contract with CBS, Abdul Haq made another network appearance in a piece Lohbeck supplied — this one about how the mujahideen were financing their war effort by blasting for rubies, emeralds, and lapis lazuli with explosives scavenged from Russian bombs. In 1988, during key end-game negotiations in Geneva between Pakistan and the Kabul regime, Abdul Haq once again turned up on CBS, complaining that President Reagan was selling out the resistance. And two months later, when the Geneva accords were signed, setting a timetable for the Soviet Army's withdrawal, he made yet another appearance on *The CBS Evening News*, this time speaking dismissively of America's financial commitment, which by then totaled an estimated \$2.4 billion since the Soviet invasion.

By then, Abdul Haq had come to be known among senior U.S. diplomats in Pakistan as "Commander Hollywood," an allusion to his frequent appearances in the American media. Other coverage, besides Lohbeck's, singled him out: *The New York Times Magazine* profiled him favorably, *Newsweek* interviewed him at length, *The New York Times* called him the leader of "more than 5,000 American-armed guerrillas," and *The Wall Street Journal* called him "the

resistance commander most likely to pull down the flag in Kabul." This reporter quoted him on more than one occasion after Lohbeck introduced us. Abdul Haq is likeable, articulate in English, and well-organized. More important, at least in the context of media attention, ever since his movements were restricted when his right foot was blown off by a land mine in 1987, he has been available in Peshawar to reporters who don't have time for lengthy treks overland. "There are two thousand commanders fighting in Afghanistan," observes Hamid Naweed. Of the commanders who spend time in Peshawar, he says, "these are the commanders the whole West knows, and [Westerners] think they have done everything. [But] the ones who will decide the future of Afghanistan are the tribal people. These guys are unknown to the West because . . . they don't have spokespeople who speak English. . . . You've never heard of them, but these are the Afghan nation."

Lohbeck's efforts to shape coverage of the war took another turn in 1988, following the defection of some Afghan air force pilots, who ended up in the hands of Abdul Haq's men in Peshawar. An American diplomat who insisted on anonymity recalls that Lohbeck told him he had met with

the defectors and the guerrillas and had coached the pilots on what to say to the press, even staging a "dry-run" press conference in which he played the part of a skeptical Western reporter.

This account was amplified by a member of Abdul Haq's guerrilla faction who was summoned to appear at the press conference. This was Mullah Malang, a well-known guerrilla fighter from Kandahar Province. Mullah Malang says that Lohbeck worked up a script for the whole thing. "There was one paragraph for me, something for me to say," Mullah Malang recalls. "He had written, 'You say to the press conference that the Russians have come back to Kandahar.' [But] this was something I knew couldn't be true. I said so then and I say so now."

Lohbeck says that he attended the press conference and filmed it, but that was all he did. "I am not a player," he said at another point. "I am a reporter."

There is evidence that Lohbeck also dabbled in attempts to supply guns to the guerrillas. Jonathan Jay Pollard, the former U.S. naval intelligence analyst now serving a life sentence for spying for Israel, stated through his lawyer in court pleadings that he and Lohbeck used to exchange clas-

Kurt Lohbeck wasn't the only CBS contract reporter entrusted to cover the Afghan-Soviet war. There was also Mike Hoover, an Academy Award-winning documentary maker whose Afghan coverage won a Alfred I. duPont-Columbia University award for CBS News and who was the subject of a widely discussed series of articles in the *New York Post* last fall.

Citing military and media sources on three continents, on September 27 *Post* reporter Janet Wilson alleged that Hoover had, among other things, staged scenes of the Afghan guerrillas blowing up a key powerline in eastern Afghanistan days after the actual event.

In early October, CBS summoned Hoover to New York and questioned him, reportedly in the presence of his lawyer, then issued a statement absolving him and all network personnel. "Allegations [that CBS] broadcast fake combat footage in the mid-1980s are simply not true," the statement said, without dealing specifically with the *Post*'s on-the-record sources.

Meanwhile, *The New York Times* published an op-ed piece by Hoover in which he reminded readers that the *Post* is a mere tabloid, commended free-lancers like himself for trying "to put a face on a million Afghan deaths," pointed out that CBS had cleared him of any wrongdoing — but, like his employer, failed to address the *Post*'s specific allegations. He dismissed the assertion that his footage had been staged. "It was a little farfetched to believe that the rebels would reconstruct 'destroyed' power pylons so that I could film them being blown up," he wrote.

Gulam Hassan Karokhel claims that he authorized the staging. He was the chief of the peasants who had lived along the powerline before the sabotage attack, and for years he worked with the Soviets' client regime in Kabul, controlling the militia posts that guarded the power grid. But a brother of Karokhel's was a member of the National Is-



lamic Front for Afghanistan, a mujahideen faction, and, over the years, Karokhel used to help the mujahideen slip safely across his land, under the noses of the militiamen. A Westerner would have called him a double agent.

In an interview in Peshawar last May, Karokhel said that the pylon filming was part of a plan drawn up by NIFA. The group is well known for cooperating with Western journalists, helping reporters who didn't have time to trek deep into Afghanistan meet their deadlines by making short trips over the border and back. About five years ago, Karokhel recalled, when the Kabul regime and Pakistani negotiators were holding talks in Geneva to work out a settlement of the conflict, NIFA, quite logically, wanted to make the resistance look as strong and popular as possible. The leadership calculated that the resistance's credibility would blossom in Geneva if the TV-viewing world could see the guerrillas carrying out a successful sabotage attack.

sified documents "to further arms sales that they were attempting to arrange."

When asked about his relationship with Pollard, Lohbeck said that, although he had known Pollard socially and had gotten information from him, he had done so strictly in the spirit of journalistic inquiry. "I received things from Jon Pollard," he said. "My employers were aware of that. Subsequently the FBI was aware of that. The CIA was aware of that. I violated no laws, period." He went on to say that he had never met an arms dealer in his life.

But then there is Dominick Spadea, a New Jersey-based manufacturer of pistol-sized machine guns. Spadea says the two men met in late 1985 and early 1986 — shortly before Lohbeck signed on with CBS — to discuss an order for 10,000 of the guns. "The mujahideen needed a type of weapon that they could smuggle into the cities and attack the Russians with at the source," Spadea says. His machine gun would have been the perfect weapon, he adds, being small enough to be concealed in the billowing garb of the Afghan peasantry.

Spadea says that he made a couple of trips to Washington to talk over the deal with Lohbeck. In Washington, he says,

"They said they would ask this famous cameraman to come and film, and show his film to all the world," Karokhel said. "They called Mike Hoover, but he didn't get there at the proper time."

Karokhel said that the sabotage went off without a hitch, that many pylons were felled, that Kabul was plunged into darkness, and that he and his peasants made their trek to the border. There, he said, they met up with Hoover, who duly filmed the peasant-refugees. Then, he said, he and NIFA leaders ordered some guerrillas back into Afghanistan with the cameraman, where they blew up the pylons that had been left standing after the first attack.

Sher Mohammed Etabari is an Afghan who says he went with Hoover. "The mujahideen were telling him, 'Set up your camera on this side, because [the pylon] is going to fall on that side,'" he said in an interview early last summer as he watched one of Hoover's films on a rented VCR in Peshawar. He added that he and the other guerrillas stayed up all night, helping Hoover with his film.

This writer had interviewed Hoover a few weeks before the *New York Post* published its initial article. In the interview, Hoover himself said that his pylon shots had been filmed days after the main act of sabotage.

"There were two kinds of attacks that were done on the pylons," he said, explaining that during the main one he was far from the scene, because he "wanted to be on a back position [where he] could film the refugees" as they traveled overland to Pakistan. When he had finished, he said, he found some other guerrillas who were mounting follow-up attacks on the remaining pylons, and he filmed them. He insisted they were blasting the leftover pylons because they wanted to do as much damage to the equipment as possible — not so that he could film them.

"Whether we were there or not," he said, "that's what they were going to do."

M.W.W.

Lohbeck told him that Abdul Haq would be the ideal recipient of the miniature machine guns because of his background in urban warfare. Lohbeck promised to make introductions and scheduled a date, Spadea says. After these initial talks, however, Lohbeck stopped returning his phone calls, Spadea says. The machine gun-pistol order evaporated, leaving the manufacturer baffled. The next thing he heard was that the mujahideen would soon be receiving a shipment of American-made Stinger missiles, the top-of-the-line, shoulder-launched anti-aircraft weapon.

Lohbeck confirms that he has spoken with Spadea, but, he says, it was only by telephone and only because Spadea called him up, unsolicited. Spadea's engagement calendar, however, indicates that the two met in person, and Spadea can accurately describe Lohbeck's physical appearance and he recalls at which Washington restaurants the two snacked and dined. In addition, Spadea's lawyer wrote Lohbeck a letter — later entered in evidence in an unrelated court proceeding — asking Lohbeck to execute a letter of intent with a delivery and payment schedule and to specify "the caliber desired."

While he was helping the cause of the mujahideen, Lohbeck was also keeping a watchful eye on other reporters' work. Lohbeck and Hurd rented a large house in Peshawar, and in it Hurd set up the field office of a Washington-based charity called the Mercy Fund. The group's direct-mail fund-raising appeals say it runs "M*A*S*H units" in Afghanistan's "front lines," and its financial statements show that the appeals bring in several million dollars each year. The statements also show that the charity's biggest budget item is not clinics, however, but "public information."

Lohbeck and Hurd rented out their extra rooms as a Mercy Fund hostel for journalists. The couple offered its paying guests the use of their telex, helped the newcomers — including this writer, in 1987 — make contacts with the mujahideen, and briefed them on the war. Often, the couple urged the newcomers to interview Abdul Haq.

The U.S. government encouraged journalists to touch base with Lohbeck and Hurd, whose names were on a list of "selected contacts for covering Afghan affairs" handed out to reporters who stopped by the United States Information Service office in Peshawar. The handout listed the Mercy Fund — the only "hostel for journalists" listed; Lohbeck — the only network representative listed — appears under "C" for CBS.

Many of those who sought out Lohbeck or stayed in the hostel said they did so because he was the representative of a respected network. Some say they came to regret their association with a man who, while initially pleasant and helpful, was quick to turn against them if they failed to see and do things his way. A few examples must suffice.

British video journalist Peter Jouvenal, one of the most respected and senior members of the Peshawar-based press corps, says that he once made a trip into Afghanistan with Lohbeck and that the two encountered some mujahideen

with covertly supplied Stinger missiles. Jouvenal says Lohbeck tried to talk him out of filming the weapons, but Jouvenal filmed them anyway. Jouvenal says that later, back in Pakistan, Lohbeck called him up and asked about his appointment schedule for the day — and, soon after, he noticed that he was being tailed by a jeepful of Pakistani military intelligence men. “The only people who knew what I had filmed were Lohbeck and the mujahideen in Afghanistan,” he says.

Lohbeck denies Jouvenal’s allegation, adding that he had never been in touch with Pakistani military intelligence.

Two Americans say that Lohbeck tried in various ways to dissuade them from covering the activities of Ahmad Shah Massoud, a prominent and well-regarded commander from northern Afghanistan, whom, it would seem, Lohbeck regarded as Abdul Haq’s archrival — at least for media attention. One of the two was Otilie English, who in 1987 left her job at the American Security Council, a conservative Washington, D.C.-based advocacy group, to make a film about Afghanistan. English says that she moved into the Lohbeck-Hurd hostel and there set about making plans for

two overland trips with the forces of Massoud. She says that, after Lohbeck heard of her plans, he tried to talk her out of them. She went ahead anyway with a first brief visit. When she returned, English says, Lohbeck brandished a piece of paper and claimed it was a cable from her former American Security Council boss, stating that she had been fired and was traveling with stolen camera equipment, none of which was true. English says that he refused to show her the cable, then denounced her around Peshawar.

She says that she went to a hotel to place an overseas call to her former boss, to ask whether he had sent out any communicate about her — he said that he had not — and there, on a table by the hotel telex, she found a copy of a message from Lohbeck to Hurd’s boss at the Mercy Fund headquarters in Washington, thanking him for the “invaluable . . . information on English.” (She took, and has preserved, this odd document.)

English says she was stunned. Since she had never met Hurd’s boss or even heard of him, she could not understand what he could possibly know about her or why he and a CBS newsman should be swapping “information” about

LOHBECK IN HIS OWN WORDS

In a lengthy interview in Peshawar in the spring of 1989, Kurt Lohbeck spoke his mind on why he had come to Afghanistan, on his journalistic performance, journalists as a group, and on why many journalists suspect him of sabotaging their work.

As to why he decided to come to Afghanistan, Lohbeck said, “Number one, because this was a way to get back into network television. It was lucrative. It’s a part of the world I enjoy being in. Afghanistan, to me, is one of the most beautiful countries on earth. The Afghans give off positive vibes. I like working with them. I like being with them. I think their struggle is partly our struggle. They’re fighting for the same rights and freedoms that I currently enjoy. And so it’s possible for me, mentally, to risk what you have to risk to cover their struggle, and at the same time do it accurately and objectively. . . . I’m not a propagandist for them. I cover the news for them.”

Asked about his close relationship with Abdul Haq, Lohbeck replied, “I fail to see how my intense personal relationship, or close personal relationships, have anything to do with who I work for. Because I work for a news organization, if that means I’m supposed to be some kind of a robot or some kind of an unfeeling human being that doesn’t develop personal friendships, then I would quit the news organization. The implication of your question is, Does this affect my objectivity in covering the war? I would say that perhaps it does, to a certain degree. Abdul Haq is a close personal friend of mine. Abdul Haq is also a major commander in Afghanistan; he is a major player in this story. It has certainly not hurt me [in terms of] access and information, although Abdul Haq certainly doesn’t tell me everything that goes on in his organization, any more than Douglas MacArthur may have told Ernie Pyle, who was a

close personal friend of his. And I don’t think Ernie Pyle was ever accused of a lack of objectivity.”

Later in the interview, Lohbeck was asked why a number of people who had passed through Peshawar spoke critically of him and described instances of alleged interference with their work. He said that when he first received his contract with CBS, Sam Roberts [then foreign editor, now executive director of international broadcasting services] had warned him that “the one thing you have to watch out for . . . is being accused of being an intelligence agent.” Lohbeck explained that, with his ringside seat on the war, it was inevitable that he would know things the “hit-and-run journalists” passing through wouldn’t know. And he said that such journalists would become envious of him and try to hurt him. “Therefore, all kinds of rumors start. It can be based on jealousy. . . . Journalists are not a breed of people that are supportive of each other. They are highly competitive. . . . [There’s] intense competition, in television, for example, to get on the air. Afghanistan has never been a high-priority agenda news item, despite the Soviet army and all. It’s been tough. People will throw rocks at each other in Johannesburg and that’s going to get on the air a lot faster than a major battle in Afghanistan. So there’s intense competition. There are a lot of things that have been said about different people. I’ve heard a lot of rumors about me. Some of them are so outlandish that it’s unbelievable. . . .”

Lohbeck went on to say that he “constantly informed three executives of CBS News of almost everything that takes place here — what goes on, rumors said about me, who’s accused of this, who’s accused of that. It goes down in a written report to executives at CBS News . . . so that when something comes out later on they’re aware of my statements at the time of what happened.” M.W.W.

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to see in the
Los Angeles Times
actually appeared in Oregon's
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As night draws near, Border Patrol officers and waiting migrants are separated only by the strands of the border fence. MT photo by John Enders

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After his right foot was blown off in 1987, Abdul Haq was more available to the press in Peshawar.

her. When asked about English's allegations, Lohbeck said that she had behaved immorally in Peshawar and that he wouldn't discuss English "for her sake." (I had a similar experience with Lohbeck in Peshawar. During an interview, he said, "There are stories that have been told to me by the mujahideen, which I have not repeated, that you spent several nights" in the house of a prominent Afghan.)

Sparkle Hayter, an American free-lancer who lived in the Lohbeck-Hurd hostel from August 1988 to March 1989, says that, like English, she made plans to travel inside Afghanistan with some of Massoud's people. Although she had made her plans in what she thought was the utmost secrecy, Lohbeck learned of them and, Hayter says, he sat her down and tried to talk her out of making the trip.

"Kurt sort of liked to control your thinking and your access to certain people," Hayter says. "I think he's had a significant impact on the way this war has been reported." The problem with that, she says, is: "The war according to Kurt just wasn't the war."

Last February, as the last Soviet Army convoys wound northward up the Salang Highway and out of Afghanistan, scores of foreign newsmen waited in Peshawar for word that the mujahideen were marching on Kabul at last. An excited Kurt Lohbeck told acquaintances that it was only a matter of days, a bit of wishful thinking expressed by members of the U.S. diplomatic corps in Pakistan and reflected in many press accounts.

He seemed to have it all sewed up: renters in the Mercy Fund hostel say they saw a telex arrive from Don DeCesare, CBS's vice-president for news coverage, asking Lohbeck to confirm whether the network did or did not have an "exclusive video arrangement with Abdul Haq." Lohbeck had apparently convinced the news executives that he, and he alone, could get front-row seats for what promised to be one of the biggest shows ever — the final push on Kabul.

The network sent out a crew. After the men filmed the computer war-room sequence with Abdul Haq, Lohbeck arranged a trip to the Kabul front.

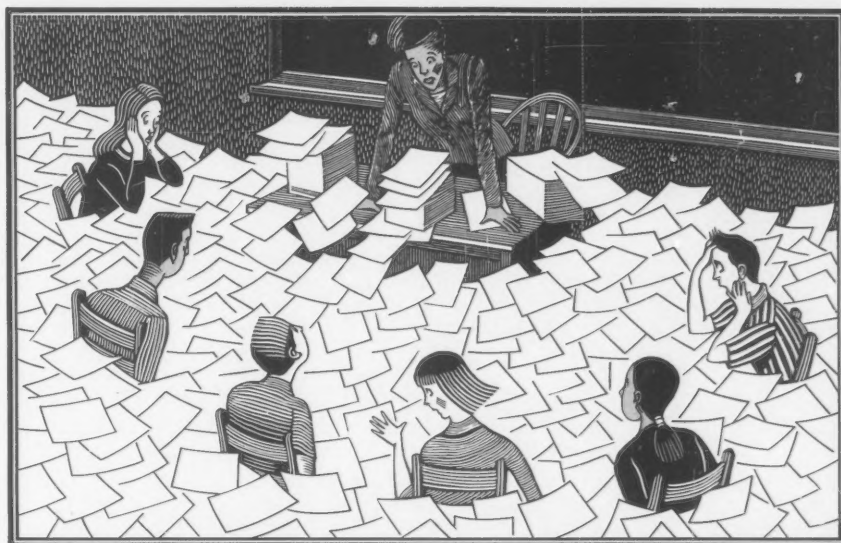
The journey was a disaster. The snow was unusually deep in the mountains. The camera crew drew mortar fire as it slogged across valleys and frozen wastes within view of Afghan army posts. The men had loaded their equipment onto a horse, but the animal somehow got separated from the crew, and the camera was lost. By the time the men arrived at Abdul Haq's base camp outside Kabul, they had nothing to film with — but there was nothing to film anyway. Abdul Haq was still in Peshawar, and Kabul wasn't about to fall to the mujahideen.

Nevertheless, guided by Lohbeck, CBS aired an optimistic report, blaming the guerrillas' setback on the snow. There was no mention of factional rivalry within the resistance, no inkling that there was a heated dispute over whether to attack the city at all, not a clue that the mujahideen might not be as united as their foreign supporters might have wished them to be. Nor was there a single word on Abdul Haq's true field strength, which, for reasons too tedious to explain on the air, was far below what would be required to march on Kabul.

"The mujahideen have used the winter to dig in around the capital," correspondent Anthony Mason said. "The mountain trails are finally beginning to clear. 'It's only a matter of time now,' said one guerrilla commander. 'When the snow melts, so will the regime.'"

The snows have melted and returned again, but the regime hangs on, perversely, stronger than ever. The U.S. waits for Afghanistan's cities to fall. To many Americans who followed this prolonged and spottily covered war story, the collapse of the mujahideens' jihad into internecine strife — complete with drug-running and rub-outs of rivals — has come as a sudden, baffling development. It is no such thing. The complicated truth of Afghanistan was always there for those who would but look.

Bitter truths are always unwelcome — and especially so in stories about our side in a "good war." But telling such truths has traditionally been the reporter's mission. In the case of Afghanistan, at least one key reporter assigned himself a different mission — as a partisan in a holy war. ♦



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THE JOURNALIST'S LIFE:
LYNNELL HANCOCK

THE MOTHER WHO TOOK ON THE COOKIE MONSTER

In November 1988, police in Harlem made what seemed to be a routine drug bust, picking up a middle-aged man after he allegedly bought crack from a street dealer. The man turned out to be Matthew Barnwell, the fifty-five-year-old principal of P.S. 53, an elementary school in the Bronx. Barnwell's arrest set off a flurry of investigations — by law enforcement agencies and by the media — into corruption and incompetence in the New York City school system, its central board of education, and its thirty-two decentralized school districts. With an annual budget of \$5.7 billion, the system serves 940,000 children.

The allegations that have surfaced — of principalships rewarded for political connections, of misappropriation of funds and equipment, of local school boards interested mostly in patronage, of grossly deficient teachers and principals — are serious. But similar charges had been made for years. One of the few people who had been writing about such things before Barnwell's arrest was Lynnell Hancock, the education writer for *The Village Voice*.

Her first big *Voice* article was typical of much of her writing in that it detailed specific abuses while keeping the larger context — the betrayal of schoolchildren — in focus. That piece focused on a Brooklyn superintendent who, as Hancock put it, "turned a school district into his own banana republic." Two of her most powerful pieces are

"Snorting with the School Board," written in collaboration with Wayne Barrett, also of the *Voice*, which ran in November 1988, and "The Cookie Monster of P.S. 224," which ran in the February 7, 1989, *Voice*. The "Cookie Monster" led off with this striking sentence: "In one of the poorest neighborhoods of New York City, this is how an elementary school principal teaches the ABCs of capitalism: she sells her students junk food illegally at 200 percent and 300 percent above cost, and then refuses to account for the profits."

Following publication of the story, which won a Front Page award from the Newswomen's Club of New York, the principal was suspended. Sixty teachers — many of whom had been driven out of P.S. 224 by the principal — honored Hancock with a party at which a poem was read that described her as an "Amazon warrior." Hancock describes herself as "a little gray-haired white woman from Iowa."

Lynnell Hancock was interviewed by Jessica Siegel, who for ten years was a high school teacher in the New York City school system. She is now a free-lance writer.



I come from another planet, the planet of Iowa. I've been in New York for twelve years now but I'm still essentially an Iowan at heart — whatever that is. I'm still very idealistic. My father is a Methodist minister from the heartland, from the tent-revivalist tradition in the midwest. I have a real strong sense of what's right and what's wrong.

I grew up in Iowa City, which is a university town, and is probably the best place to grow up in Iowa, if you have to grow up in Iowa. You can see the horizon there — it makes a big difference. You realize that you're just a tiny little spot on the earth. You grow up looking at the horizon, wanting to get out. You know something exciting is happening somewhere else. In New York City, you spend most of your time just looking at your feet and your pocketbook. It's much more insular.

I went to the University of Iowa, where I majored in English. In my last year, I began studying East Asian languages, and in 1977 — thanks to a scholarship that was only for kids who had graduated from Iowa colleges — I went on to get my master's degree in Japanese language and literature from Columbia.

I was on my way to getting a PhD and could feel the cobwebs engulfing my eyes as I sat in the library translating tiny little characters. I realized that I needed to do something in the world. The Columbia Journalism School offered a joint degree in East Asian studies and journalism, so I ended up there.

I wanted to be a foreign correspondent and right out of journalism school I was offered an internship in Tokyo, but my husband didn't want to go. He was working at the [Bergen County, New Jersey] *Record* at the time and we had a small child. After that I had another child. I did a lot of free-lance writing about Japanese culture.

I had really no intention of going into investigative reporting or education reporting. What got me into it was getting my spurs at our local public school — P.S. 95 in the Kingsbridge Heights area of the Bronx.

There were 1,200 children in the school; it was just a great big factory. My husband and I volunteered in our son's kindergarten class. Every week one of us would go on Friday, so we got real inside knowledge of what teachers had to cope with and what the kids had to cope with in what was supposedly one of the better schools in the district.

The teacher was an excellent, really caring teacher. There was no way, though, that she could help all those kids. I remember one tiny little kid who had a lot of health problems. He needed someone with him constantly. We would sit down and help him write his name. He really wanted to write his name — it would bring tears to my eyes to see how much he was struggling. There was no way

the teacher could pay the kind of attention he needed. I saw him the next year in the play yard with 300 kids running around and he was clinging to the fence, looking sad, and I thought, This kid is lost already in first grade.

My initiation into the power structure of the school was when I got fed up with the fact that there was no furniture in the annex where the kindergarten was. One class had forty kids in it — a double kindergarten — forty kids tripping over one another, two teachers trying to teach them in the same room. They would all tell me, "This is regulation; it's okay." But I thought, It's *not* okay for these kids.

The principal had three months to deal with it and didn't do anything. I went to the superintendent and told him about it and the next day the furniture showed up. But the interesting thing was that I got raked over the coals for not going through "the chain of command," as they call it. The principal got my son's teacher in tears because he accused her of sending me over to the superintendent. She was really upset because she wasn't tenured yet and was afraid for her job. The principal also came down hard on the director of the annex. It went on and on.

That's how I got my spurs in the school system. It's a very complicated system — very difficult for a parent to learn. The whole system is political and education is pretty incidental. That doesn't mean that there aren't great teachers and principals out there who care, but I think the dominating force in the system is to keep the adults happy, to keep the unions and all the other interests satisfied, to preserve the status quo. If you educate kids in the meantime, that's fine. But that is the bottom priority. As soon as I learned that, a lot of things opened up.

One of my neighbors is the vice-president of a city-wide parents group that was suing the Board of Education for running illegal kindergartens, for violating the New York City health code. He knew I was free-lancing and he asked me if I would do a story on the case. I approached an editor at the *Voice* and that's how I did my first education piece. When that was finished, I was labeled "the education writer for *The Village Voice*" by my editor. That's how journalism is: you write one story and you're the expert.

When I write a story I usually start from the bottom, the grass roots. I think you get the most interesting and the most truthful information from parents and others who are fighting the New York City school system. For instance, "The Cookie Monster" story began with a phone call from a teacher who transferred out of P.S. 224 because he couldn't take it anymore. He was an excellent

The Cookie Monster story was difficult to write because almost 90 percent of the people didn't want to speak on the record because of fear of reprisals.

After Hancock's article, principal Virginia Noville, a.k.a. the Cookie Monster, was suspended. Sixty teachers threw a party for Hancock.



Tom McGovern/The Village Voice



For a profile on incoming New York City Schools Chancellor Joseph A. Fernandez (shown below), Hancock not only went to Miami to talk to him during his last days as that city's top educator, but spent time with Miami schoolchildren (above) and teachers (bottom), to assess the Fernandez record.



source because he was an ex-United Federation of Teachers chapter chairman and he had worked with Virginia Noville, the principal, to help her with things like fundraising.

He had a lot of inside information. He gave me a series of documents, the same documents he had given the board of education inspector general months before. Supposedly the inspector general was investigating but the teacher was getting frustrated. He didn't actually know if they were investigating at all. The contacts he had given them hadn't been contacted.

One of the parents he wanted them to contact lived in the housing project right across the street from the school. This parent, a mother, didn't have a phone. She had an important document — a flyer that advertised religious services that were going to be held on the weekend in the school. The question was: Where was the rental money going? In any case, the entire thing was illegal and unconstitutional since there are board of education regulations about religious services, particularly ones where a collection will be taken.

I went out there and knocked on the door and there she was. She was so informative and dying to talk, and she had never received any of the registered letters the inspector general sent her because the mail in the projects often gets mixed up and lost. Of course, all he would have had to do was take a trip out there.

Meanwhile, among the documents the teacher had given me were receipts from the cookie companies that the principal ordered from, as well as written testimony from teachers complaining about her. I used the phone numbers on the receipts to get in touch with the cookie companies to try to obtain documentary evidence. Then I would talk to parents and kids.

I hit the jackpot with a seventh-grade girl who had graduated and who was really upset and articulate. This youngster told me how Noville had pulled her out of classes in order to sell stale cookies during the last days of school. She described

how the principal would get on the loudspeaker: "Be sure to bring your money tomorrow. We're going to sell cookies."

I also contacted the people who were supposed to be investigating the principal. With law enforcement, it's a tricky kind of thing. I think it is okay for a reporter to exchange information, but very cautiously. The board of education investigator that I established the relationship with, I would tell him a couple of things that I knew might help him with his investigation and he would tell me a couple of things which might help me with my story. That's something that's debated among journalists — whether you should ever cooperate with a law enforcement agency. I don't think you can say you never can cooperate if you are working for the same purpose, to expose corruption.

For the "Cookie Monster" story I also compiled a list of about twenty-five teachers, former teachers, former assistant principals, former superintendents, and current staff members, parents, and custodians. It was a difficult story to write because almost 90 percent of the people didn't want to speak on the record because of fear of reprisals.

There was one case of reprisal that really disturbed me. One of the parents who was willing to speak out was Rose Pinto. After the story broke and the TV cameras came, she was featured very prominently. She's a single mother who takes in foster babies. Someone lodged charges against her with the Bureau of Child Welfare, saying that she was a crack addict, that she was forcing her children to beg on the streets to support her crack habit.

The Bureau of Child Welfare had to come out to investigate. They had to talk to her children. One was five years old and was in tears from the kinds of questions they were asking. Rose's foster babies were taken. I was distraught. The end result was that the Bureau of Child Welfare found nothing and dropped the charges and she got a new foster baby. But she lost one — a two-year-old that her daughters had grown very attached to.

That really shook me up. Now I not only think twice, I think three or four times about the retribution that can happen to these poor people.

I did try to get an interview with Noville. A *Voice* photographer and I were escorted into her office, but all she said was, "You're going to have to talk to the superintendent. I have no comment." That's typical of the board of ed. They say, "I can't talk to you unless I get permission from the superintendent," and the superintendent won't return your phone calls.

So I sent a letter to Noville, listing all the allegations that I wanted to discuss with her. The only response came the night of our deadline. My husband called our office. We had just finished

editing. He said there was a message on the answering machine from Virginia Noville. It said, "I received your letter. All the allegations are false. Thank you. Have a nice day." I used it in the article.

I think the story that maybe had the most impact was "Snorting with the Schoolboard," which Wayne Barrett and I did together. The day it came out, that school board was suspended [four members of that board, in the Morisania section of the Bronx, were subsequently indicted on charges ranging from grand larceny to electioneering].

It was a journalist's dream come true. The timing was so perfect because this was the district that, because of [principal] Matthew Barnwell's arrest, the world was interested in. I was getting remarkable stories from incredible sources about cocaine parties [actually policy meetings during which drugs and alcohol were consumed] and inside information about the school board factions, when it turned out that both political factions were about to have competing parties on the same night. These were fundraising parties which many teachers felt compelled to buy tickets for and attend to protect their jobs.

I was actually scared to go to the parties because we had the rap sheets on some of these people. One of the guys — connected to one faction — had been convicted of carrying weapons and been arrested for possession of drugs two or three times. So there would be drugs and weapons, and where there are drugs and weapons you have to watch out.

But it was so perfect because you usually can't find these people; their numbers are unlisted. Wayne Barrett and I went to the first party, which was in the South Bronx and which was real funky and dark. There was a salsa band, smoke, and the whole bit. Everyone was totally smashed by 7:30, early evening. We went from that to the other party, this incredibly glitzy place, with fancy sequined gowns and little delicacies. The school board president was walking around in his full-length cashmere coat. That party was \$60 a head and the other one \$25 a head. And some teachers felt obliged to go to *both* parties!

What's in it for the school board? It's not so much the money — there's some money that passed hands and there's some stealing of equipment. Entire rooms of computers are disappearing, thousands of dollars worth of stuff. But I think the more compelling draw for these people was control of other people's jobs. It just outraged me so much that people can hold other people's lives in the palms of their hands so cavalierly.

Unfortunately, people's ears seem to prick up when it's a case of theft of money or goods. It's not a sexy story to go into a school and show neglect of kids everywhere. That should be out-

rageous enough. That to me is the bigger scandal than anything else — complete neglect.

It's kind of died down now, but directly after Matthew Barnwell's drug arrest all the papers were suddenly interested in stories about corruption in the school system. I think it was good that there was so much competition out there. *Newsday* did terrific stories about District 4. The *Times* did a great story on District 21, Coney Island, with an all-white school board, which I would have written about if they hadn't. Now I think it's going to be back to me being the only one writing about them.

The education beat is not considered a top beat on a daily paper. It's considered drudgery. It's difficult. There isn't a city hall bureau where all the reporters hang out. There's no camaraderie. The newest reporter on the paper gets the education beat. And they burn out real fast because covering the beat on a daily basis is so frustrating.

Covering the schools is covering the communities and what neighborhoods care about. Which is only natural, since education is usually the biggest budget item. Very often you'll have very convoluted issues that are difficult for a beat reporter to come in and understand immediately. You have to stay with the community for a while, figure out who's who.

Most education writers don't start from the grass roots, because the easiest thing to do is to call up [board of education president] Bobby [Robert F.] Wagner and get his response. And he always has something to say. Very often it is "I know it is really bad and I have no idea what to do about it." He's constantly reported saying that. Or the board of ed's p.r. department issues a press release and the reporters do a story about it. The daily beat reporter's first option is always to go to the top. The *Times* is notorious for *never* talking to parents. They did a story on my school district — District 10 in the Bronx — where you have very poor people from the South Bronx and a very affluent Riverdale crowd. The premise of the story was good: Is there a disparity of service between the two? But they talked to one or two principals — and that's as low as they got. If you only talk to the bureaucracy you only get one side of the story. To me, the most interesting and the most truthful people to talk to about what goes on in the school building are the parents — the parents and the students.

Just as kids are missing in the debate on the school system and the board of education, they're missing in the stories reporters write. And I think it's the media's responsibility to constantly remind people that it's kids we are talking about here, and how the politics of the school system affects them, and how it affects them their entire lives. ♦

The dominating force in the school system is to keep the adults happy, to keep the unions and other interests satisfied. Educating kids is the bottom priority.

Education is not considered a top beat. It's considered drudgery. The newest reporter on the paper gets the education beat.

FOR APPROVAL

AYEN

HOW THE
JAPANESE
ARE
"HELPING"
THE U.S.
MEDIA
UNDERSTAND
JAPAN



BY
JOHN B. JUDIS

As American resentment grows over Japan's \$50 billion trade surplus and takeovers of American industry, Japan has poured money into educational efforts designed to win over American public opinion. According to TRW vice-president Pat Choate, who is writing a book on foreign lobbying, Japanese firms, foundations, and government agencies will spend as much as \$250 million this year trying to capture Americans' "hearts and minds." In addition, Choate estimates, the Japanese will spend another \$100 million hiring lobbyists, lawyers, and public relations flacks in Washington. No other foreign country spends this much.

Japan's massive investment in American opinion has raised a host of questions about press coverage. Japanese firms, foundations, and government agencies have funded American television and radio shows on U.S.-Japan relations. Should U.S. television and radio accept this kind of funding? The Japanese have also hired many former government officials as advisers and lobbyists and are indirectly subsidizing many of the best-known academic experts on U.S.-Japan relations through the funding of Japan studies programs in universities and of Japan research at think tanks. Should reporters covering U.S.-Japan relations continue to use these academics and former officials as disinterested authorities in stories about relations between the two countries? What should editors of op-ed pages do when an academic whose research has been funded by the Japanese submits a column on U.S.-Japan relations?

When it comes to wooing print journalists, the Japanese have followed practices commonly employed by other countries. Through the Japan Press Center, which is loosely affiliated with the foreign ministry, they have invited hundreds of American journalists to Tokyo for expense-paid two-week tours of government and industry offices. (When I was recently interviewing a Foreign Ministry official, he asked me if I wanted to go on a Japan Press Center tour before finishing my story.) The U.S.-Japan foundation also offers fellowships for American journalists that will allow them to do stories in Japan. Many of the top American journalists covering U.S.-Japan relations, like *The Washington Post's* influential business columnist Hobart Rowen, have gone to Japan under the auspices of the Japan Press Center.

But the most important way the Japanese influence the press is through establishing ties to those experts upon whom journalists rely for information and analysis. Three former top U.S. trade negotiators and four deputy trade representatives have gone to work for the Japanese. Few Japan experts at think tanks or universities are not dependent on Japanese funding for their research. According to Japan expert Chalmers Johnson, a political scientist at the University of California at San Diego, the Japanese fund about 80 percent of American research about Japan. Setting aside the question of whether specific individuals are corrupted by this funding, its cumulative effect is to reinforce certain opinions in the debate about U.S.-Japan relations.

John B. Judis is a senior editor of In These Times and the author of William F. Buckley, Jr.: Patron Saint of the Conservatives.

Given this huge investment in American opinion, American reporters risk misleading the public every time they quote an authority on U.S.-Japan relations. A classic case occurred in October 22, 1986, when *The Washington Post* reported a debate between two former trade officials over the semiconductor pact that the Reagan administration forced the reluctant Japanese to agree to. The story, headlined FORMER U.S. OFFICIAL ASSAILS JAPANESE PACT, reported that "former Commerce Undersecretary Lionel Olmer" had criticized the agreement in a debate with "Alan W. Wolff, who represented the domestic semiconductor industry."

The story's headline and the identification of the principals gave the reader the impression that a disinterested former official had challenged the opinion of a paid industry lobbyist. In fact, however, Olmer was employed at the time the piece appeared as an adviser to Nippon Telephone and Telegraph. Moreover, Wolff, besides representing the semiconductor industry, was himself a former deputy trade representative in the Carter administration. The argument was really between two former officials, both of whom had a financial stake in their positions.

This practice of not identifying the outside interests of American Japan experts has become more or less standard operating procedure. During the debate last spring over whether the U.S. should approve joint production with Japan of a new FSX fighter plane, *The New York Times*, the *National Journal*, *The Wall Street Journal*, and other news organizations cited James E. Auer as an authority in stories on the FSX sale, without explaining his vested interest in defending the sale. After leaving the Pentagon in 1988, Auer had become director of a Japan studies program at Vanderbilt University, for which he has been raising money from Japanese corporations.

Perhaps the most misleading story appeared on April 10, 1989, in *The Wall Street Journal*. Eduardo Lachica reported that the debate over the FSX had spawned a "new round of 'Japanphobia.'" To back up this claim, Lachica quoted Auer, whom he identified as "the Pentagon's former special assistant for Japan," Frank Carlucci, whom he identified as "President Reagan's Pentagon chief," and Kent Bowen, whom he described as "an engineering professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology." Auer aside, Carlucci had extensive connections with Japanese business both before and after becoming secretary of defense. In March, Carlucci and another member of the Carlyle Group had headed a group of Japanese and American investors who had bought Sears Roebuck's commercial real estate arm. The financing for the deal was arranged by Sumitomo Bank and Bankers Trust Company. Bowen, for his part, receives research funds from the Hitachi Corporation.

Lachica says he didn't know about Auer's fundraising activities and didn't ask about Bowen's research funding, but he thinks readers would have been able to evaluate what

Auer and Carlucci said from their having been identified as former Pentagon officials who therefore — the reader would conclude — had played some part in negotiating the FSX deal. "By definition, they had an ax to grind," Lachica says. But the connection between the two men and the FSX deal is not noted in the story, and their identification as former officials enhances rather than detracts from their authority. Moreover, within the story itself they are used to substantiate what the reporter claims to be true rather than to illustrate one side of a controversy.

Lachica thinks that reporters must be sensitive to their source's financial connections, but in the case of U.S.-Japan stories, he says, this concern can go too far: "The moment you start scrutinizing people's positions, you'll spend half the article footnoting the sources and you'll have no story at all."

Newspapers face a similar problem in identifying the authors of op-ed pieces. On October 8, *The Washington Post* published an op-ed piece by George R. Packard headlined THE JAPAN-BASHERS ARE POISONING FOREIGN POLICY. Packard was identified as "dean of the Paul H. Nitze School of the Johns Hopkins University and director of its Center for East Asian Studies." But Packard is a salaried consultant to a Washington firm that advises Japanese companies investing in the U.S. and American companies investing in Japan. He also seeks funds from Japanese corporations for the university's Center for East Asian Studies.

David Ignatius, the editor of *The Washington Post's* Outlook section, says he was not aware of Packard's outside interests, adding, "I inevitably have to look to authors to inform me of any outside nonjournalistic connections." But he concedes that the absence of a full identification can be misleading. "It is really important to give readers some help in understanding why a person is making an argument in our pages," he says.

Japanese investment in American television dates from the mid-1980s. The Japan Center for Information and Cultural Affairs struck a deal in 1984 with Ted Turner's Cable News Network to arrange sponsorship for *This Week in Japan*, a show that continues to appear on CNN. Telejapan, a Japanese production company, started producing shows for the Christian Broadcasting Network in 1983, for USA Cable Network in 1984, and for some public television stations in 1986. In all these cases, private Japanese firms were listed as sponsors of the shows but one important backer was not listed: this was the Japanese government, which appears to have been involved in the various projects.

In Japan there is a much closer link between government and business than in the U.S., and few businesses or business organizations will undertake an initiative as important as sponsoring an American television show on U.S.-Japan relations without government involvement. The Center for Information and Cultural Affairs, which arranged sponsor-

One way
they influence
the press is by
establishing
ties to
the experts
journalists
rely on

ship for CNN's *This Week in Japan*, works with the foreign ministry, which had to approve the release of funds for the show. Telejapan, for its part, is affiliated with Japan's Ministry of International Trade and Industry (MITI).

Mark Dulmage, until recently the producer of CNN's *This Week in Japan*, insists that the network retains "100 percent control" over the show's editorial content. "Nobody has ever said, 'This is what we want you to do.' I have one of the longest leashes in television," Dulmage says. But representatives of the Center for Information and Cultural Affairs can make suggestions for what should appear on the show and participate in conferences reviewing a previous week's show. They also helped set the original guidelines for the show — emphasizing "what is common between the U.S. and Japan."

Telejapan's shows have been plagued by controversy. To make *Japan Today*, a weekly news show it began producing in 1984, appear independent of government influence, Telejapan set up an advisory board made up of prominent American journalists and academics, including George Packard and former *Newsweek* correspondent Kim Willenson. Willenson quit the board six months later, however, when he learned that representatives from MITI were involved in setting the editorial objectives. "I understood the show was being done by an arm of the government, so I resigned," he said.

In 1986 Telejapan began producing *Faces of Japan* for public television, but the next year most of the stations that make up the United States-Japan Public Television Council refused to show the series because they suspected MITI's involvement. Telejapan, however, continues to produce features for public television and is working on a new news show, the details of which it refuses to disclose.

Japanese firms and foundations are now directing most of their efforts toward public television news. Since last June, NEC Electronics has been underwriting the transmission of a nightly news show, *Today's Japan*, that is being shown on public television stations. Produced by media giant NHK in Tokyo, the program presents that day's news in Japan. Alan Foster of Boston station WGBH, who coordinates the distribution of the show, says, "Americans need to be exposed to how other people view the world and the U.S. without a North American filter." But rather than simply rebroadcasting regular Japanese news broadcasts, which are simulcast for Tokyo hotel residents in English, NHK produces a special version for English-speaking viewers abroad. Thus, American viewers are not necessarily getting to see how the Japanese view the world; what they see instead is how the Japanese want Americans to think the Japanese view the world.

NHK is also much closer to the Japanese government than American broadcasting companies are to the U.S. government. Edward Lincoln, a Japan expert at the Brookings Institution, says NHK is "like Britain's BBC." NHK officials, he adds, "recognize they are part of the governing structure in Japan. They are unlikely to stray from government positions on things."

The Hitachi Foundation, the Toyota Foundation, the Ise Cultural Foundation, and the U.S.-Japan Foundation (cre-

ated with funds from the Japan Shipbuilding Association, but governed by a board composed of eleven Americans and nine Japanese) have also subsidized public television shows and stations. In 1986, the United States-Japan Foundation provided the funds for a Japan Project operated out of public television station WNET in New York. One purpose of the project was to raise money from Japanese companies to underwrite public television shows.

Peter Grilli, who directed the Japan Project, set up the Japan Public Television Council. Before he resigned last February, Grilli and the council had secured funding for three programs and partial funding for a WGBH-TV series on contemporary U.S.-Japan relations.

In seeking funds, Grilli and the council drew a distinction between corporate and government sources. "A corporation is there to advance its own image, but not necessarily government policy. But a government putting money into television is there to promulgate its policies," Grilli explained. But as was the case with CNN's *This Week in Japan*, there is some question whether such a distinction can be made between Japanese corporate and government funding.

The WGBH series, which is being produced by Steve Atlas, got funding from the Japan Automobile Manufacturers Association, which also funded *Faces*. The Asia Society will coproduce the series. Atlas is trying to secure further Japanese and American funding. He insists that the show's funders will not have control over its content: "We make it clear that there is to be no participation whatsoever from the moment they agree to put money in it." But Atlas is not going to go ahead with the show unless he can get half the funding from American sources. "If the bulk of the funding comes from Japan, there will be suspicion that they have purchased some public relations from us."

But even Atlas's careful procedure raises questions about journalistic independence. Atlas says he indicates to Japanese funders that he will deal with issues in an "evenhanded fashion." "We feel everybody's interests are served by a ventilation of these issues," he says. But this assumes that what appears evenhanded to American audiences will satisfy both Japanese and American funders and serve both Japanese and American interests. By funding American shows, the Japanese may get to define what is an "evenhanded" look at U.S.-Japan relations.

Among their many efforts to influence American opinion, the Japanese have been funding radio shows on Japan. The U.S.-Japan Foundation, NHK's Hosono-Bunka Foundation, and Japan Airlines, among others, have funded radio and television shows on Japan produced by the Cambridge Forum of Massachusetts, a nonprofit organization that produces and distributes television and radio programs. A current example is a ten-part radio series, "Understanding Contemporary Japan." Sarah Lown, associate director of the Cambridge Forum, says she and her colleagues are not worried that Japanese funding might compromise their objectivity. "The aim of our organization is just to improve

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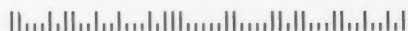
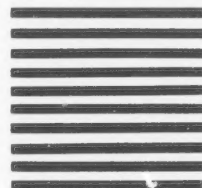
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understanding and not to take a certain stance or position," she says.

But Lown's definition of "not taking a stance" means, essentially, not angering the Japanese. She says that the programs do "not take an adversarial stance toward Japan in any way," and adds, "I suppose if someone did a lot of Japan-bashing we'd think twice about broadcasting it." Lown's definition, like Atlas's, raises questions about what it means to air "objective" broadcasts about U.S.-Japan relations. Who defines that objectivity?

The Japanese have also been subsidizing radio coverage. The United States-Japan Foundation is giving National Public Radio \$100,000 a year for coverage of Japan. In the foundation's quarterly bulletin, it announced that "National Public Radio, with support from the U.S.-Japan Foundation, has recently increased its international reporting capability by naming four reporters to cover Japan and the Far East for the award-winning public affairs programs *Morning Edition* and *All Things Considered*." Such an arrangement would seem to create tremendous pressure to air stories pleasing to one's funders, but Jane Couch, NPR's vice-president for development, says there is no such pressure. Couch says that NPR periodically sends the foundation tapes and reports on what the news organization is doing, but insists that "there has never been a whit of manipulation or influence peddling." She thinks it sufficient that NPR's funders be identified on the air. "The perception is resolved by the listeners. They consume and decide," Couch says.

While Couch says she would not accept tobacco company funding to cover the tobacco industry, she thinks that accepting money from the United States-Japan Foundation to cover Japan is proper. "As a private foundation, the U.S.-Japan Foundation is not the subject of coverage," Couch says. "They have an interest in Japan, but we are not covering the U.S.-Japan Foundation."

She has a point. Although the United States-Japan Foundation was funded by a Japanese foundation created at the behest of the Ministry of International Trade and Industry, the foundation is one step removed from direct Japanese government influence. Some NPR journalists are nevertheless concerned about the relationship. One journalist, who asked not to be identified, said, "It becomes a problem when you have people who are advocates for a certain government providing money which is essentially to cover their country. They don't tell you what stories to put on the air, but the real decision is in what you cover, not the particular story that goes on the air. It inevitably appears to taint the way we make our news decisions."

Media critic Ben Bagdikian makes a similar argument. "When you have foundations and corporations and governments supporting a regular insertion about themselves, they have overcome one of the discriminating functions that good professional journalism should perform," Bagdikian

says. "They have said that this subject is going to get to the public without having to compete with all the other information."

What can U.S. broadcast and print media do to insure that they do not become public relations platforms for Japan's government or for Japanese companies and their American lobbyists? In newspaper and magazine stories about U.S.-Japan relations, both editors and journalists must begin to exercise greater caution in identifying and citing authorities. Op-ed editors must demand the same kind of identification from authors that they might be expected to request if the subject were the Arab-Israeli conflict or Pentagon corruption.

A good test of whether editors and reporters should demand such information is to ask whether a reader's impression of a story or column would change if an authority or author's outside connections were disclosed. In the case of Lachica's *Wall Street Journal* report on "Japanphobia," for instance, fully identifying Auer, Carlucci, and Bowen would have completely undermined the thrust of the story. The same would have been true if George Packard had been fully identified in the bio-box accompanying his *Washington Post* op-ed piece.

Radio and television will also have to be much more vigilant about accepting Japanese funding for shows that address economic relations between the United States and Japan. It may not make sense to distinguish between government funding and funding from quasi-private agencies like TeleJapan. Radio and television producers should ask themselves whether viewers' impressions would be altered if they saw the show as a Japanese government product rather than something produced independently.

It may also be necessary to re-evaluate what it means to offer objective news programming of international conflicts. In covering other areas of international conflict — say, between the U.S. and Soviet Union — television and radio stations have not tried to satisfy both American and Soviet perceptions and interests, but rather to present in a clear and unbiased way the major positions taken by disinterested Americans. Although the U.S. and Japan remain close allies, this would seem to be a good guideline to follow in covering those areas of international economics where the United States and Japan are clearly in conflict.

Public television and radio must be specially vigilant to not allow themselves to be compromised by their funders. To the extent that Americans value public radio and television news, they do so because they believe they are getting coverage more serious and less tainted by special interests than on the commercial networks. By accepting funding for programs and correspondents by interested parties, public radio and television are endangering their own special credibility. ♦

By funding American shows, the Japanese may get to define an "even-handed" look at U.S.-Japan relations

GETTING SOUTH AFRICA

Journalists are showing courage and cunning in covering a massive challenge to apartheid

BY PIPPA GREEN

On September 6, the day of the South African elections, television cameraman Jimi Matthews sneaked into the riot-torn, "colored" working class township of Manenberg, on the outskirts of Cape Town. The potholed streets were blockaded with flaming tire barricades and groups of youths stood clustered on street corners. Matthews set up his camera in the home of a sympathetic resident. Through the net curtains of the living room, he shot heavily armed police patrols — on foot, in vans, and in armored trucks — cruising up and down the main street, firing shotguns, apparently at random. A local youth ran the videotape through the blockades and past the police patrols to the city, and that September night, *NBC Nightly News* screened the scenes of violence that Matthews had surreptitiously covered.

In a house across the street from Matthews's hideout, ABC and CBS crews were filming similar scenes, while on the street a free-lance still photographer dressed as a housewife would occasionally slip his cameras out of a shopping bag to steal long-distance shots of the police taking aim. All these photographers were clearly breaking the press regulations of the three-year-old state of emergency, which bans journalists from covering protests or police action. And

this was by no means the first time in recent days that journalists have defied South Africa's censorship rules.

Since August, when anti-apartheid groups launched their Defiance Campaign, a systematic effort to defy segregation laws and political restrictions, the media have followed in the protestors' wake — "in the slipstream," as Jimi Matthews put it. Just as the Defiance Campaign made the state of emergency unworkable, so, too, the media, in covering it, have pushed the censorship laws beyond their limits.

In fact, network correspondents are confident that any day now South African President F.W. de Klerk will substantially relax — or even scrap — the censorship rules that have helped to hide the apartheid story from the world since 1986, when they were introduced nationwide. "The government has 'de facto' relaxed a lot of the regulations against us," says CBS South Africa bureau chief Larry Doyle. What has changed?

First, the story has. After a three-year period of enforced quiet, there came a turning point last February, when nearly 1,000 people who had been jailed without trial stopped eating. The government, its economy already pretty tattered, could not afford to have political detainees starve themselves to death in its jails while the U.S. Congress and Commonwealth countries were considering further sanctions. The release of the detainees in August inspired anti-apartheid activists to launch the Defiance Campaign: black patients presented themselves at whites-only hospitals for treatment, picnickers flocked to segregated beaches, and militant youths held illegal meetings where they unfurled the green, black, and gold flag of the outlawed African National Congress. The police did their bit too, by whipping demonstrators, setting dogs on beachgoers, arresting clerics such as Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and, on election night, resorting to gunfire and tear gas. The images, the graphic scenes that

make good television, were back. "The South African story this year has been very good," says Richard Sergay, who has covered South Africa for ABC News since 1985. "The strength of the story outweighed the emergency regulations."

A second factor that undercuts the regulations was the sheer persistence shown by large numbers of journalists. From the beginning of August to election night in mid-September, over 100 arrests of journalists were recorded. Matthews says that he was arrested almost daily in that period and that on one occasion police confiscated sixty-three videocassettes from his downtown office. All the network camera crews were arrested several times. Associated Press photographer Adil Bradlow was arrested so frequently that his agency, fearing for his safety, decided to pull him out of Cape Town — the center of the Defiance Campaign — for a couple of weeks. "The cops have arrested us so often now that they're on a first-name basis with us," says Bradlow.

Usually, journalists are the first targets of police action during anti-apartheid demonstrations. Then, when the cameras are gone, the police take action. At the height of the Defiance Campaign — four days before the election — police arrested dozens of journalists in downtown Cape Town, as well as several bewildered tourists and one hotel manager with a camera around his neck. Journalists were in town to cover a march by anti-apartheid activists from a church to Parliament, about three blocks away. At least fifty-two journalists were arrested before the march started, and some were picked up who were not even near the church. The march became known as the "Purple Rain" march, because soon after every visible journalist had been arrested the police sent a water cannon down the city streets that sprayed protesters (and offices and banks) with bright purple dye.

A few weeks earlier, most foreign cor-

Pippa Green, who lives in Cape Town, writes regularly on South Africa for The Nation and In These Times.

BACK INTO THE NEWS

respondents had received a telex from Brigadier Leon Mellett, a key aide to Law and Order Minister Adriaan Vlok, warning that "decisive action" would be taken against reporters who refused to leave "unrest areas." Referring to smuggled and sneaked footage, Mellett wrote: "Underhand actions of this nature invariably lead to one-sided and warped versions of events, which is not only unfair to South Africa, but cannot be tolerated." ABC's Sergay later described the missive as "one of the most threatening I've received in the four years I've been here."

But the threats, as far as the foreign media were concerned, stopped at the police stations. Although journalists have been arrested, there have been no further repercussions, for instance, against camera crews who hid from the cops and got their footage out. All the networks used the chilling election night street scenes shot in Manenberg (later, attorneys and journalists estimated that twenty-three people were shot dead and hundreds wounded in Cape Town that night), and none reported threats by the authorities.

The local media's recent experience with the censorship regulations, meanwhile, has been much more harsh. Although all the alternative newspapers and many of the mainstream dailies have been taking the same risks as the foreign television crews, many of their editors have been threatened with prosecution. One newspaper, the *New Nation*, which has a mainly black readership, has been threatened with suspension. Early in November the *New Nation* got a letter from the minister of home affairs, Eugene Louw, which listed thirty-one articles published over a three-month period and described them as "subversive propaganda." The apparent irrationality of the list astounded the newspaper's attorney, Amanda Armstrong. For instance, a letter from a reader condemning the racial bias of the death penalty was cited for "discredit[ing] the South African judiciary."

Anton Harber, co-editor of *The Weekly Mail*, a gutsy opposition news-weekly, faced three charges: two for publishing articles on the conditions of detainees, another for quoting ANC leader Harry Gwala, who is "listed" by the government and thus may not be quoted. These charges were eventually dropped, but three other editors at other publications are facing similar charges and a publisher at a fifth has been fined. And Max du Preez, editor of the Afrikaans opposition weekly *Vrye Weekblad*, who was given a six-month suspended sentence for quoting Gwala, now faces six other charges for reports he published on military conscription.

"Newspapers have been taking the most extraordinary risks," observes Irwin Manoim, co-editor of *The Weekly Mail*. "Even *The Star* [the country's largest daily] has been running quite blatant breaches of the regulations The point is there are never any pointers about what the regulations mean, so the herd instinct tends to dominate."

This contradiction in government policy is the third reason the media regulations seem to be collapsing. The more sophisticated reformists in the government, such as de Klerk and Foreign Affairs Minister Pik Botha, are keen to win Western approval. But the police and cabinet ministers such as Eugene Louw (appointed by de Klerk's arch-conserv-

ative predecessor, P.W. Botha) are fighting to hang on to their arbitrary powers. So it is not really surprising that foreign correspondents have been removed by the police but have suffered no repercussions for smuggling their footage. Any action against them, such as deportation, would involve a high-level government decision and possible international wrangles. The police and low-level officials of the Justice Department, on the other hand, can harass local journalists with relative impunity.

This wavering has only given more head to the press, which is using the inconsistencies to argue that regulations must now be lifted. "There's a whole range of laws the government is allowing people to break," says media lawyer Armstrong. "If the government allows the situation to continue it will bring the whole legal system into disrepute. It's not in their long-term interests to allow the media to flout the law."

Even if the media regulations are lifted, that is no guarantee of a free press. There are many statutes on the books that tightly regulate news about the police, the army, the prisons, and nuclear power, for instance. But if the media regulations go, the police will no longer be able to haul journalists off the streets on a whim, or demand, absurdly, that if they come across "unrest" they should turn a blind eye. ♦

CENSORSHIP:

Before chasing anti-apartheid protestors from a whites-only beach, police removed photographers like Fanie Jason (right) and Eric Miller, who shot this picture. Then they put their dogs and sjamboks (whips) to use.



Eric Miller/Alrapix

MEMO: TO GOOD OLD BOYS AND '90s WOMEN

BY KAY MILLS

Women in the newsrooms of America are tired of pointing out the lack of serious commitment to giving women in enough of those newsrooms the good assignments they have earned and to promoting them to jobs they would have if they were men. Tired, too, of seeing newspapers, magazines, and television stations failing to present more of the stories that female journalists know are not being adequately covered. Tired of being accused of whining by bosses who think women are so very much better off now than before. And tired of talking to themselves about the problem.

But they remain determined to continue presenting their views — sometimes to audiences that could make an immediate difference, like the Associated Press Managing Editors meeting in Des Moines this past October, sometimes to an audience that simply would like to make a difference, as with the "Women, Men, and Media" conference in Washington earlier this year.

The panelists at that Washington conference included many top women — and men — in the business, yet the audience was almost exclusively female. (Important men in the industry did manage, however, to get to Washington for the American Society of Newspaper Editors' convention that began the very next day.) Sponsored by the University of Southern California School of Journalism and the Gannett Foundation, the conference offered the right sermon to the wrong congregation.

One of the men who did show up was outgoing ASNE president John Seigenthaler of the Nashville *Tennessean* and

USA Today. He told the group at the National Press Club that "the more good ol' boys like me are forced to face realities of equity in the marketplace, the more progress will be made . . . All of us take away feelings from these encounters that work on us." Geneva Overholser, editor of the *Des Moines Register*, agrees. Women must keep having conferences, underscoring the idea that they are only "halfway through a revolution, although people would like to think that it's over."

Halfway seems a generous assessment in light of statistics presented at the Washington meeting. One report, by Jean Gaddy Willson of the University of Missouri, showed that while women now account for two-thirds of the nation's journalism students in college and make up 57 percent of the entry-level jobs, they hold only 25 percent of the middle-management jobs. Another study released at that conference — this one by the Communications Consortium of Washington, D.C. — found that network news shows have seen only a 6 percent rise in the number of female correspondents since 1975, that women get only one-quarter of the bylines on the front pages of the nation's major newspapers, and that women make news in only one out of ten stories.

"To get beyond halfway, those of us who are feminists need to encourage young women to speak up," Overholser insists. "This may mean forming women's caucuses at newspapers again, and having editors meet with them. It means sensitizing management."

Even women who are sensitive to the issues, like Overholser, admit to oversights. Shortly after she assumed the editorship in Des Moines, Overholser recalls, the *Register* decided to take a quick look at whether the city was ripe

for an outburst of crack drug sales. "Whom did we pick? All white men. It took some of the young women to point out what we'd done. If I don't do enough, think about the average guy."

What else can editors and station managers learn by listening? What can news managements that genuinely want to advance women do to find more of them to hire and hold onto them once they're hired? At its October meeting in Des Moines, the Associated Press Managing Editors — the decision makers for American newspapers — aired these very questions. For a change, women were not just talking to themselves, and they offered several tips to an attentive audience.

- First of all, get out of your office and talk to your staff, said Barbara Henry, editor of the *Rochester Times-Union* and *Democrat and Chronicle*. "We don't have enough career conversations with women who are up and coming," she says. "Ask your assistant business editor what are her goals and concerns. You may find out she sees her boss working eighty hours a week and, with two children, she doesn't want to do that but she's afraid to bring up that concern."

- Find out why studies show that more women than men want to remain reporters or photographers rather than aspire to management positions. There may be a variety of correctable reasons.

- Do make sure that your company has a solid parental-leave policy.

- No matter what hours someone has to work, make sure they are regular, even in their irregularity, so people with small children can make stable child-care arrangements. Look at whether your paper supports child care in any way, either through tax shelter income or, better, through referral services and on-site care or participation in a local child-care consortium.

- Consider job sharing, not only for young couples with child-care responsibilities but also for people who may want to write books and yet maintain a salary or people who need to care for elderly parents.

- Break out of the mold of assigning the guys to cover the plane crash and the women to interview the children at the schoolyard during a teachers' strike. Some male editors still assume that they should not send a woman on a dangerous

Kay Mills, an editorial writer for the Los Angeles Times, is the author of *A Place in the News: From the Women's Pages to the Front Page*.

assignment, especially overseas. It's her life; let her help make the decision. Then make sure that she knows how to protect herself and what risks you don't want her (or her male counterpart) to take.

- Be aware that by 1990 a woman is thoroughly tired of being the only female at a meeting. White men have little experience or empathy with being the outsider. They need to know that that sense of isolation may hurt a woman's job performance. She may be inhibited from speaking up. And when she does make suggestions she may find no one else there with similar experience to enlarge upon her new ideas.

- Acknowledge that the top-down management style may not be the only effective technique. Many women adopt a more collegial style, and if it gets the job done, support it.

- Recognize the continuing influence of the old boy network. Male editors know other male editors and when one wants to move, another will grab him, hiring freeze or not. Otherwise, the hiring freeze is inviolable.

- Require that women (and minorities) be interviewed for each opening or promotion. They may not be the right person for the immediate job but the process may uncover new talent for later hires or promotions. Post each job opening to give all an opportunity to apply and to bring forward people you otherwise might not have considered.

- Set goals to improve the representation of women and minorities at all levels in your news operation and let your managers know their performance reviews will include performance in this area.

- Make sure your organization *in fact* pays women the same as it pays men. (Would each newspaper or broadcaster in the country that *says* it pays equally be willing to have an outside auditor, trained in the jargon of the media business, do a salary survey, department by department, and release the results?)

In sum, be active, not passive, by taking steps to anticipate employees' needs, especially those of reporters and editors with young children, says Jeannie Falknor, former assistant managing editor of *The Charlotte Observer*. Falknor, who worked on the *Observer's* Pulitzer Prize-winning team that investigated televangelist Jim Bakker, has left her job to spend more time with her eight-year-old

son and hopes newspapers will learn to better accommodate women who are just starting their families.

There are also some things women can and must do for themselves:

- Be prepared to move to advance or to get out of a rut. Men do it; you shouldn't be reluctant to, either.

- Don't pass up a promotion just because it doesn't come at the most convenient time. Opportunity not only doesn't knock twice, it rarely knocks at precisely the right time.

- Define clearly what you want, such as a job-sharing situation, says Margaret



Some
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It's her life;
let her help make
the decision



Wolf Freivogel, who splits the position of deputy Washington bureau chief for the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* with her husband, Bill. When the Freivogels, who have four children, started their arrangement, they told the paper it could have either of them at any time but never both at the same time. That has led to fancy footwork, such as the time she covered the day-long emergency-room watch after the shooting of Ronald Reagan, handing over the assignment and her notes to Bill at night after he had gotten the kids into their pajamas, piled them into a cab, and met her at George Washington University Hospital.

- Don't assume the worst. Often women will find they are pushing on an open door but they do have to push; some problems women think are obvious

are questions their bosses simply have never considered.

- Ask for the promotion, don't just wait for it to happen, assuming your goodness will ultimately be recognized, says Geneva Overholser.

- Don't forget other women as you move up. How many newspapers have some top editor who got there only because management needed a woman near the top but didn't want one who would rock the boat? Or, as good old boy Seigenthaler put it, once some are promoted and are at the head of the hunt, "they lose the scent for the rest."

- Watch for problem editors and news directors and spread the word. "Public humiliation [of these editors and broadcasters] should be our goal," suggests *Los Angeles Times* writer Kathleen Hendrix. Women need to get the information out on where are the good places to work, who are the good guys and the bad guys, and which women haven't lost the scent for the rest of us.

Hard-nosed editors and ambitious journalists who aspire to move up the masthead must remember that there is a point, beyond job equity, to the entire exercise. That point is to bring more varied viewpoints to page-one meetings, to conferences with writers, to planning sessions when long-range projects are outlined. Too few editors and news directors realize that they simply aren't covering their communities fully when they carry so few stories involving women. Diane Mason wrote recently in the *St. Petersburg Times* about the odd sensation she had thumbing through an issue of *Newsweek* on a plane ride. "I was rudely interrupted by a thought: there are no women in this magazine." Not until page 44 was there a photo of a woman and on page 48 there was a story about Benazir Bhutto, prime minister of Pakistan.

"Peppered in among George Bush, George Shultz, James Baker, Alan Greenspan, New Hampshire Gov. John Sununu, and a group of construction workers . . . , I found women doing the following, all in advertisements: hugging a man in a pitch for the U.S. Army, standing with a family next to a Dodge truck, selling flowers, smoking a Winston, and sitting behind the wheel of a Ford van." That's not an accurate portrayal of the world. ♦

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OPINION

NOT CATASTROPHIC BUT BAD ENOUGH

BY JIM SIBBISON

Angry men and women surrounded an automobile in Chicago last summer, and an NBC-TV news team was there. Many viewers will recall the scene: The men and women — all “senior citizens” — waved picket signs, pounded on the hood, and shouted at Representative Dan Rostenkowski, who sat stoically inside. He had angered them by sponsoring a new catastrophic health insurance law for the elderly that, among other things, called for a surtax on their income tax.

“The elderly,” congressional correspondent Andrea Mitchell explained, “have been whipped into action by powerful lobbying groups. The result: millions of letters and postcards to Congress. They’re not against the new benefits — unlimited hospital care, new at-home benefits, prescription drug coverage. They just don’t want to pay for them.”

Mitchell was by no means the only reporter to portray the millions of elderly who opposed a catastrophic-care surtax as would-be free-loaders in league with powerful lobbyists. Many Washington reporters — quoting members of Congress or anonymous sources or simply expressing their own opinion — made the protesting elderly appear interested only in their own well-being. A survey of early coverage suggests that most reporters never understood those previ-

sions of the law that caused the outcry — a failure that led to conspicuously unbalanced coverage of an issue that NBC’s Tom Brokaw called “one of the most explosive issues of the year.”

On June 17, 1988, two weeks before President Reagan signed the catastrophic health care bill into law, one journalist provided the kind of information that, for a long time, would be absent from coverage of the controversy surrounding this important piece of legislation. The journalist was L. Gordon Crovitz, assistant editorial page editor of *The Wall Street Journal*, a paper that has a somewhat unusual policy: editorial writers are expected to do their own reporting as they go about gathering the facts to support their positions. Crovitz talked to his contacts in the Reagan administration and was, he recalls, “stunned” by what they told him. In his unsigned editorial Crovitz reported that the legislation contained a massive tax increase for retirees sixty-five or older. The tax would pay for benefits that most of them already had from private insurance, former employers, or Medicaid, the government’s low-income health insurance program. Starting in 1989, Crovitz noted, a retired person who paid an income tax of \$150 or more would be obliged to pay a 15 percent surtax on his income tax — and this percentage would rise by 1993 to 28 percent, and was expected to go right on rising. In 1989 no individual would pay a surtax exceeding \$800, but this ceiling, too, would rise. “The couple who pay \$1,600 [in 1989] will pay an extra \$2,100 a year by 1993,” Crovitz wrote. “The Treasury estimates that, by 2005, couples will pay closer to \$8,000 a year.”

On the day after Reagan signed the bill, coverage by Washington-based reporters emphasized the benefits of the law but downplayed the costs and seemed unaware that most beneficiaries would be getting duplicate coverage. The July 2 piece by Spencer Rich of *The Washington Post* was typical. Rich quoted Reagan as saying that the new legislation would protect the elderly from “a choice between bankruptcy and death,” and in the final paragraph of his fourteen-graph piece he gave the surtax the following brushoff: “The law will be financed by increasing the Medicare

monthly premium and by imposing an annual ‘income-based’ supplemental premium on the two-fifths of the elderly with the highest incomes.” Rich made no mention of duplicate coverage and his shorthand summation of the law was misleading: while it is true that more than two-fifths of the elderly would be paying for the program, this group included people with incomes as low as \$13,000 — which is hardly suggested by the phrase “highest incomes.”

Following a spate of early-July coverage, the subject was more or less dropped — by the press, if not by the lobbying organizations. The biggest of the “elderly lobbies,” the American Association of Retired Persons, backed the bill. While AARP officials conceded that a new funding formula was needed, they insisted that the legislation would provide essential benefits to “the oldest, the poorest, and the sickest.” The National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, on the other hand, opposed the bill. Two of the main points

“
As TV told the health bill story, elderly people who opposed the surtax had to be rich
”

made in the National Committee’s mailings were that the surtax could be expected to rise steadily over the years and that the reason the surtax was high was that only the elderly were paying it. This, the committee said, was comparable to taxing only the parents of schoolchildren for public education or only veterans to pay for veterans hospitals. That’s when retired people started raising hell and sending off those millions of letters and postcards to Congress.

The response of the bill’s principal sponsors — Representative Fortney “Pete” Stark of California and Senator Lloyd Bentsen of Texas — was to attack the protesters. Bentsen was quoted in *The Washington Post* as saying at a January 1989 press conference, “What you have is wealthier people not wanting to pay the additional premium.” And then there was Representative Rostenkowski who, on October 4 — the day the House repealed the bill — assailed the “wealthy few.” The term was never defined, but presumably any retired person

Jim Sibbison, who lives in Amherst, Massachusetts, is a correspondent for the British medical journal The Lancet.

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with an annual income of \$36,000 or more was to be considered wealthy. (It is that group that would pay the maximum surtax of \$800 per person during the first year of the program.)

The rich-versus-poor story played well on network television. On ABC, CBS, and NBC the "rich" were never sick. Viewers were shown footage of robust, smiling elderly men and women playing golf or working out in exercise classes. The poor were always in a hospital or nursing home, some walking slowly with the aid of a walker, others being pushed in wheelchairs.

People who opposed the surtax *had* to be rich. If they weren't, they were made to look so. Thus, for example, one seventy-two-year-old widow who opposed the tax was shown playing golf, and using a golf cart to get around the course. She certainly wasn't rich, though: her annual income — as ABC correspondent Sheila Kast explained on the September 18, 1989, *World News Tonight* — was \$20,000, and her starting surtax would be \$350. She already had private insurance, the widow said, so "catastrophic care, as far as I'm concerned, will give me nothing, except that I have to pay for it."

The Stark-Bentsen attitude toward the protesting retirees was reflected in the print press as well. These elderly people were, it seemed:

Spoiled — In late November 1988, Martin Tolchin of *The New York Times* explored the possibility that the elderly "might be taking more than their fair share [of government benefits], depriving their children and grandchildren." An accompanying photo showed two elderly men in swimming trunks happily posing for the camera at that favorite playground of the retired rich, Miami Beach. Tait Trussell, a Florida-based syndicated columnist and former member of *The Wall Street Journal's* Washington, D.C., bureau, examined the evidence and came to the conclusion that the government was "soaking" the elderly. "Ironically," he wrote in the Leesburg, Florida, *Daily Commercial*, "while most Americans have been the beneficiaries of tax relief in recent years, older Americans have been slapped with three increases." In 1983, he explained, Social Security income became taxable; then, in 1986, some changes in the reg-

ulations increased the income tax of the elderly; and, finally, in 1988, there came the catastrophic-care surtax.

And selfish — Jodie T. Allen, *The Washington Post*, October 11, 1989: "October 4, 1989 [the date the House repealed the surtax] may be remembered as the day we finally admitted, right up front, that we don't care very much about each other. At least not enough to pay each other's medical bills. . . . While the elderly were glad to accept a nice new benefit, they, or at least the most vocal among them, were not ready to have to pay for it. . . ." This is the old charge that leaves out the essential information that the elderly protesters saw no reason to pay the surtax because most of them already had medical insurance.

Some reporters gave the protesters a more sympathetic hearing. Mike Causey of *The Washington Post* described some of the nasty surprises contained in the bill as far back as January 1989 in his column about federal employees. Robert Rosenblatt of the *Los Angeles Times* was another reporter who did not automatically dismiss the protesters' case; an aide to Senator Pete Wilson of California told Rosenblatt that "there is a genuine outpouring of grass-roots opposition" to the bill.

What reporters like Tait Trussell were saying — and what Washington reporters seemed reluctant to face up to — was that there was something wrong with the law, not with the elderly protesters. Many members of Congress were openly admitting as much during the debate that preceded repeal in early October. One such congressman was Representative Brian Donnelly of Massachusetts, who told his colleagues: "What we did not see a year ago, those of us who were authors and conferees . . . were the fatal flaws that thirty-two million beneficiaries saw. . . . The real fundamental flaw in this legislation is that over half the beneficiaries already had some or all of the coverage. They had already paid for the coverage before we came along and said to them, 'You take this coverage even though you already have it, and you pay an additional fee.' They objected to that, and rightly so."

That simple insight — so clear early on to so many elderly people — seemed beyond the reach of many reporters. ♦

'Listen, my momma may
have raised a mean child,
but she raised no hypocrites.'

—Molly Ivins, *The Progressive*

Molly Ivins on George Bush:

"Deep down, George Bush is shallow."
The Progressive, March 1989.

"We do have some minimal standards for citizenship. Real
Texans do not wear blue slacks with little green whales all over
them. Real Texans do not refer to trouble as 'deep doo-doo.'
George Bush has a hard time passing."
The Progressive, March 1988.

"Now George Bush the Younger is running for governor of
Texas. We call him 'Shrub.'"
The Progressive, May 1989.

Molly Ivins on Ronald Reagan:

"It's such a fun Administration—half of it is under average
and the other half is under indictment."
The Progressive, June 1988.

"If Reagan's IQ slips any lower, we'll have to water him
twice a day."
The Progressive, January 1987.

Molly Ivins on Texas:

"The criterion for being considered an honest politician
in Texas is as follows: If you can't take their money, drink
their whiskey, screw their women, and vote against 'em anyway,
you don't qualify."
The Progressive, June 1989.

"Things are so bad in Houston, the lawyers are walking around
with their hands in their own pockets."
The Progressive, September 1986.

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JUDGMENT CALL

WHEN DO YOU RUN WITH A WALL STREET RUMOR?

BY WARREN STRUGATCH

One afternoon last spring, on the way back to his desk at the Reuters midtown office, Gary Seidman edged around a crowd on the street, including some bored New York cops. The occasion, he learned, was a visit from George Bush at the building next door.

Soon after he arrived in his office, two things happened: the dollar began to fall precipitously and the phones began to ring. Behind the frenzy was a rumor, one of hundreds that move the financial markets each day. Still in its infancy, unusual only in its scale, was the rumor of the moment: President Bush had been shot.

Seidman's employer, Reuter Financial Report, puts out a "market commentary" every fifteen minutes, and the next one out included the latest word: the dollar was falling on a rumor that the president had been wounded. Seidman's colleagues worked the phones. The next market commentary included a denial from the White House. Soon the dollar began to stabilize. Total lifespan of the lunchtime Wounded President rumor: ten minutes.

Warren Strugatch is a finance and business journalist who lives in New York. Maisie McAdoo, a free-lance writer, contributed to this article.

Gary Seidman is one of a growing number of financial journalists who traffic in rumors. Reuter Financial Report, a real-time electronic subscription service, primarily targets Wall Street traders and other market professionals. Rival services include the Dow Jones Professional Investor Report, McGraw-Hill's S & P MarketScope, and Knight-Ridder's MoneyCenter. So competitive are the services that each employs "chasers," editors using stopwatches to track who breaks a story first; the winning margin is often measured in seconds. The traders who subscribe demand information instantly on each market fluctuation. What's moving the market is often a rumor — maybe true, maybe not.

"To many journalists, the term 'rumor' still has a disparaging sound," observes Ellen Freilich, a financial reporter with Reuters. "Do we deal with gossip? Gossip is what the market is about — investors around the world chewing the fat. One man's spreading a rumor is another man's disseminating information."

Time Inc., up 2 1/8 . . . Buy-out rumors . . . Paramount mentioned . . . Co. reaffirms merger plan with Warner . . . UAL Inc up 6 3/4 . . . Reports that Robert Bass bought 2.5 to 3%.
Latshaw Enterprises Inc., down 7/8 . . . Will buy stake in Standard Brands Paint Co., traders say.

The North American market for financial and economic information reached \$1.5 billion in 1988, according to Link Resources Corporation, a New York research and consulting firm. Approximately one-third of that revenue comes from the various electronic professional investment information services, which, for the most part, transmit validated information. But they do send out a certain proportion of unvalidated information, identified as such — what traders believe may be true (or partially



C.J. Niculae Ascii

true) and therefore are acting on. They have, accordingly, been branded "rumor wires."

Reporters on the rumor wires track market changes and attempt to learn the causes of those changes. They phone the principals, who are often unavailable or who refuse comment. They seek the inside story from market players: traders, analysts, bankers, executive recruiters, any number of sources. I heard this, is it true? Is it at least plausible? Documentation is elusive. Time runs out. The information is reported as rumor.

But the phenomenon is no longer limited to these wire services. The most respected financial editors and reporters in print journalism routinely cite rumors in their stories. The old J-school adage, "We report facts, not rumors," has been rendered obsolete by the quickening pace of financial reporting. The rules are changing.

Robert J. Cole of *The New York Times*, perhaps the senior takeover reporter on Wall Street, was reluctant not long ago to let down the barricades and report rumors in his stories. Today he often does so, acknowledging that rumors are as much a market force as documentable events. "My position is, if the stock is moving, the public wants to know why. If the reason is a rumor, that's the news."

Tim Metz, a former *Wall Street Journal* reporter ("Heard on the Street"), now a merger and acquisitions specialist with the Hill and Knowlton public relations firm, asserts that the rumor mill has earned respectability. ("Heard on the Street" is one of the oldest "rumor" columns; its niche is detailed coverage of deals or other events with potential stock-price impact that analysts or insiders are anticipating will take place.) "In the early 1980s, if I heard ten rumors maybe one would pan out. Last year, before I left the *Journal*, six out of ten would pan out and I would be hearing price, terms, and conditions two hours before the announcement," Metz says.

Some financial reporters concede that standards are still evolving. "Before we repeat rumors we need at least two, preferably three sources we perceive to be independent, ones we trust," says Timothy Andrews, managing editor of the Dow Jones Professional Investor Report. But competitive pressures often truncate

the validation process. In 1987 Pierre Belec, a Reuters financial reporter, scored a coup by breaking the resignation of Paul Volcker as Federal Reserve Board chairman, on a tip from a precious metals trader. Belec "flashed" the Volcker rumor immediately, without a single confirmation. "You pick up a rumor and consider the source," explains Belec. "I had confidence in who it was — we had a relationship built up over years. And then there's your gut feeling — it was a good fit, that rumor. It was kind of hard to ignore. The markets were saying something."

Still, too much dependence on instinct while under tight deadlines leaves journalists vulnerable to having their strings pulled. Wall Street reporters still redden at mention of the Dayton Hudson con a couple of years ago, when a mentally ill man convinced reporters that he was launching a takeover of the Minneapolis retailer.

Many reporters insist that their own savvy guards them from being taken in by clear-cut hoaxes or more subtle forms of manipulation. The more candid admit to doubts. "I personally have never gotten a hoax call," says Reuters's Seidman. "At least I don't think I have. But you don't know, really, if you are being manipulated."

Scenario: John Arbitrager has his eyes fixed on Acme Inc., whose shares have recently eased up to \$43. He flips through his Rolodex and finds the phone number of a financial reporter at a Manhattan-based daily, Sam Speed, who calls frequently for market tips. Arbitrager tells Speed he's bought a 5 percent share of Acme's outstanding shares at 43, and implies a takeover is imminent. Bank financing is available, he says, although he will not name banks; long-term debt could be financed by selling off certain divisions, and he names the divisions. The call is made about 3. Speed has time to write the story for tomorrow, but not time to thoroughly shop the rumor around. The published story spurs next-day trading, and shares

rise to 52. John Arbitrager sells his shares, earning several million dollars. News of that circulates, and the market realizes he bluffed the takeover. By mid-afternoon Acme is down again, trading at 43. Arbitrager, quite a bit richer, buys back his original stake. Sam Speed, meanwhile, is off chasing his next story.

A real-life scenario was alleged in connection with rumormonger extraordinaire Dan Dorfman, whose columns and CNN *Moneyline* appearances are widely watched by investors big and small for information on take-over possibilities. Last summer *U.S. News & World Report* published a story saying that the SEC was looking into a pattern of stock transactions involving Centaur Partners, a Maryland-based investment partnership, which bought and sold shares in companies "in play" — that is, up for sale. The news account said that Dorfman ("the superstar among financial journalists") had mentioned Centaur "repeatedly in the last fourteen months." Dorfman says that the *U.S. News* report is itself an unfounded rumor, that there is no SEC investigation.

In financial journalism, most sources are biased: arbitragers and corporate raiders leak or withhold information as it suits them. Officials at target companies, for their part, typically retreat into the stock phrase of corporate silence, "We don't comment on rumors." Sources do, however, talk among themselves. The three-source confirmation rule seems valid until one takes into account the cross-pollination factor: market players are continually in telephone contact, meaning one's second and third source might well hear the same rumor from the first — or even from another reporter who talked to the first.

Last spring, the Society of American Business Editors and Writers in New York offered a workshop on "The Media's Role in The Takeover Game." By the end of the well-attended session, a consensus had been reached that financial reporters are actual players in the market, and as such are subject to manipulation. Syndicated financial columnist John Crudele may have best summed up the problem. "At what point does a reporter pull the trigger and start writing about takeover plays?" he asked. "We have been helping a lot of people make a lot of money." ♦

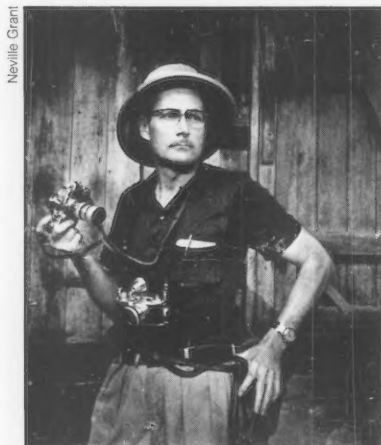
**“
If the
stock is
moving,
the public
wants to
know why.
If the
reason is
a rumor,
that's news
”**

BOOKS

THE ICON MAKERS, I

BY FRED RITCHIN

"I believed my reportage not only had to be an acutely wrought characterization, a direct and trustworthy story, but it had to dominate the legend," wrote Gene Smith to a *Life* editor in 1954 about his extended struggle to depict Albert Schweitzer, whom *Life* had earlier and onerously labeled "The Greatest Man in the World." The same can be said of the task faced by Smith's biographer. In



Neville Grant

W. Eugene Smith in Africa to photograph "the Greatest Man in the World," 1954.

posthumously depicting American photojournalism's looming inspirational presence, its revered humanitarian and ardent defender of self-expression, biographer Hughes also had to dominate a legend in order to get at the man.

And that he does, not only managing

Fred Ritchin, formerly picture editor of The New York Times Magazine, has just completed a book called *In Our Own Image: The Coming Revolution in Photography*.

to subdue the legend, but partially eviscerating it in this study of an insecure, self-centered man who cruelly manipulated those close to him while creating often heroic figures in his acclaimed photographs. "There is no way for the uneasy mind to accept Schweitzer," wrote Smith in Africa about the authoritarian, at times abusive doctor. After reading the extraordinarily detailed and clear-headed *Shadow and Substance*, one is left with the same painful dilemma concerning the photographer.

What does one make of a photojournalist assigned to photograph Schweitzer who on his return made another photograph — of a hand and a saw — to secretly add to an empty area in a photograph of the doctor, and in the process came up with a world-famous image? Does one empathize with his having had technical problems with his film and write off the composite as part of what he called, referring to the Schweitzer story, "the search through the maze of confusions to the island of intimate understanding"? Or should it be seen as the expression of a poetic restlessness, an unwillingness to be constrained by convention? "I had to release many years of gathered answers . . . and start again amid the churning, babbling, the

W. EUGENE SMITH: SHADOW & SUBSTANCE: THE LIFE AND WORK OF AN AMERICAN PHOTOGRAPHER

BY JIM HUGHES.
McGRAW-HILL. 606 PP. \$29.95

crowding of new questions," Smith explained to a *Life* editor. "Sometimes it was as if I must try to separate the raindrops from the wind, and preserve them all intact."

Or what of his classic 1951 *Life* reportage of life under Franco, "Spanish Village," which profoundly deepened and extended the reach of the visual essay, transcending the simple narrative and prompting Ansel Adams to write that he was "proud of my profession"? Not only would Smith recreate events for his camera, a common enough practice at the time (nowadays in search of more exciting imagery we seem to want to get people to do what they normally would not do before the camera), but it turns out that, in searching for an opening picture, he visualized and directed it



Front line soldier with canteen, Saipan, 1944. Smith had tremendous empathy for soldiers and civilians caught in the war.

as if on a movie lot. The center of the village was "filled with men and women, several children, a half-dozen burros, two dogs and a rooster," who were moved around in a shot that took nearly three hours. "There must be a realization that photography is the best liar among us, abetted by the belief that photography shows it as it is," asserted Smith, and he is very right; but what of the idea that at its foundation journalistic photography is assumed to be an excerpt from an ongoing reality and not from a fabricated one?

Some of these kinds of revelations are new, some have been floating around for a while in the photojournalistic community (a much shorter profile of Smith appeared in a large-format 1985 volume of photographs, *Let Truth Be the Prejudice*). But it is the confronting of layer upon layer of disclosure in this extensively researched book (some 300 people were interviewed) that forces the reader into a troubled re-examination of a photographer whose piercing and courageous work from World War II showed violence at its horrific worst, whose explorations of the lives of a country doctor (1948) or nurse-midwife (1951) are monuments in their psychological insight, compassion, and, in the latter case by choosing a black heroine, condemnation of racism. His lengthy

work covering the effects of mercury poisoning among the people he lived with in Minamata, Japan (1972), became a landmark in the world's new awareness of the destruction of the environment. His signature photograph, "The Walk to Paradise Garden," of his two children walking hand-in-hand into a clearing, was chosen to conclude the popular 1955 Family of Man exhibition and book. Even his teaching was memorable: perhaps only Smith would decide to hold a course called Photography Made Difficult.

Then there is the man himself. Accepted by combat-hardened soldiers in the Pacific as one of their own, flying on nearly as many dangerous missions as the best pilots, Kansas-born Smith was apparently so insecure that he needed to bring his mother to live with him in New York where she served him as assistant, chauffeur, and business manager (his father had committed suicide, a casualty of the Depression). She

also dominated him and his family: one of the book's more unsettling passages describes a Vermont motel-keeper refusing to rent a single room to Smith, his wife of less than a month, and his mother, whose idea it was. He would also become an amphetamine and alcohol addict, leave his wife and four children unable to pay the mortgage, ask for money from almost anyone while feeling more deserving of it, and threaten suicide, in large part to provoke those who cared most about him.

Yet it was also Smith who, more than any other photographer, could stand up to the all-powerful editors of *Life* if he felt they were misrepresenting the spirit of his work or if they tried to curtail his shooting time ("To leave now would jeopardize story" was his standard telegrammed response).

So much of the substance of this book — gleaned in large part from his own writing in the 44,000 pounds of personal effects he gave to the Center for Creative

Photography in Tucson, Arizona — casts Smith in such a disagreeable light that the reader may wish for the concealing *Shadow* of the biography's title. Younger photographers for whom Smith has been the closest thing to purity a cynical world allows may be the most affected. (Both the book's author and I serve on the executive committee of the W. Eugene Smith Memorial Fund, which awards a \$15,000 grant every year to a photographer working on a major project in the tradition of "humanistic photography"; it should be pointed out that, as Hughes's colleague, I also read and commented on the book's manu-



The Walk to Paradise Garden, 1946. Besides concluding the Family of Man exhibition and book, this image was used for advertising by Ford, Kodak, and the ILGWU.

The Spinner, 1950, appeared in the classic Life essay "Spanish Village," which Edward Steichen called "a new landmark in photo-journalism." As much poetic as journalistic, the story line deals with faith and mortality in Franco's Spain.



script in a massive second draft of the five drafts the book would take to complete.)

But there is also something awesome about Smith's resolve, fueled by his combination of vulnerability and ego-mania. To reconcile the man and his work, it would have been helpful to be able to see more of his images, including the way they originally were published, particularly for the nonphotographer who may become lost at times in the myriad of not always necessary detail. Overall, however, *Shadow and Substance* delivers: one ends up rethinking not only Smith and his photographs, but perhaps more importantly, what this medium we call photojournalism is all about.

THE ICON MAKERS, II

BY VICKI GOLDBERG

At the end of the eighties, photojournalism finds itself in an odd and difficult place. Television has largely preempted breaking news. Fewer and fewer magazines publish extended picture stories, and only a small number of newspapers have taken up some of the slack. Yet as the audience grows smaller and more localized, the photographs seem ever more daring and personal. Three new books from different viewpoints sketch out a patchy history of what has happened to photojournalism over the last thirty years.

Life: The Sixties is essentially a rehash of the catalog for a traveling show called *Life: Through the Sixties*. There's a new and nicely written text by John Neary that won't add much to your store of knowledge, but the earlier book, in

LIFE: THE SIXTIES

EDITED BY DORIS C. O'NEIL
LITTLE, BROWN AND COMPANY. 236 PP. \$35.00.

true catalog fashion, printed the pictures bigger and a lot better. Many brilliant photographs and historical landmarks dot these pages, from Charles Moore's photographs of the civil rights conflict — *Life* covered civil rights memorably — to NASA's pictures of the race to the moon, and then there are the competent, the sweet, and the silly that always made up the bulk of the weekly *Life*, a magazine that made some pretense of imitating life itself.

In the sixties, *Life* and other picture magazines were still essential links in the communications chain, but by the end of the decade, TV was crowding them hard. (The weekly *Life* folded in 1972.) The times they were a'changin'; *Life* took note but maintained its traditional values. The content of the photographs

Vicki Goldberg is a contributing editor of American Photographer magazine and the author of Margaret Bourke White: A Biography.



Malcolm Browne, AP, Buddhist monk immolating himself, *Life*, 1963. The New York Times judged this photograph too harsh to print, but *Life* did not flinch from the fierce images that sealed Vietnam in our memories.

might be hippy, yippie, or violent, yet the form remained straight and proper. These pictures were first and foremost about information, which they provided with generally admirable clarity. Journalism as it was then understood was supposedly objective. Photographers were disinterested, slightly distant observers with access to the truth. Photojournalism was not art, and individual style was not supposed to get in the way of communication. The ground rules of journalism in general were changing, in the work of photographers and writers like Robert Frank, William Klein, Hunter Thompson, and Tom Wolfe, but there's little evidence of that in this selection from *Life*.

The only big photographic change traceable on these pages is the gradual increase in color. Important news early in the decade was all black and white, and some of it continued to be so, but NASA's photographs were in color, and Larry Burrows's complex images made the Vietnam War vivid in a new way.

In Our Time: The World As Seen By Magnum Photographers is a story full of highlights; unfortunately, the story itself has been made hard to read. Magnum, founded in 1947 by Henri Cartier-Bresson, Robert Capa, and four other photographers, was the first successful agency run by the photographers themselves. Free lances retained copyright to

their photographs, had some say about where they were published, and sometimes kept control over the captions, so that never again could a picture of leftists be cropped and used to illustrate a rightist article, as had happened to Capa in 1936. Through the years, Magnum has consistently fielded some of the world's finest photographers. This beautifully produced volume is laced with splendid images and records of major events, plus good essays by Jean Lacouture and Fred Ritchin, and a disappointing text by the usually estimable William Manchester. The layout and editing, however, are unfair to the photographs. Most of these pictures are historical reports on one

IN OUR TIME: THE WORLD AS SEEN BY MAGNUM PHOTOGRAPHERS

NORTON. 456 PP. \$59.95.

level or another, yet the chronology skitters about like a jumping bean. An attempt is made to group photographs of the same region (although India slips in beside Brazil), and sometimes a group of images by one photographer stays together, but the photo-essay, a Magnum long suit, is scantied, and if you wanted to trace an individual style you'd have to work very hard indeed. Here photojournalism is deracinated, divorced from its context, its time, the history it portrays; the pictures are left to float free

like discrete *objets d'art*.

The change in the sixties toward a more personal, inward-turning style begins to surface here, and the more recent photographs are less straightforward. Neither photographers nor audiences are so certain anymore that reports of any kind can deliver the truth, or that reporters are necessarily objective. Photojournalists, like the rest of us, must cope with the disillusion, cynicism, and irony that have settled on the culture. Magnum photographers seem to produce ever more complex images, sometimes admittedly subjective, often stylistically inventive, even obscure. Form and content tend to merge, as in disturbingly unbalanced pictures taken inside asylums, or wacky, staccato versions of amusement parks, and at times aesthetics seem more urgent than information or social concerns. Museums now treat photojournalism as reverently as still life, and Magnum photographs are currently on display in museums in New York and Paris; yesterday's news becomes today's work of art.

Rolling Stone: The Photographs unabashedly proclaims itself art. These pictures are sumptuously produced in a large format — so large that John Belushi's face covers two pages with the

gutter running right through his nose and the right half of the poor man's face dropped down a quarter of an inch below the left. In a way, *Rolling Stone* is symptomatic of what's happened to photojournalism: not much space is left for it. Some fine essays, such as Annie Leibovitz's on Nixon's departure from the

ROLLING STONE: THE PHOTOGRAPHS

EDITED BY LAURIE KRATOCHVIL
SIMON AND SCHUSTER. 119 PP. \$50.00.

White House and Brian Smale's on Skinheads, have been printed over the years and are excerpted here, but *Rolling Stone's* trademark is portraiture, and photojournalism, no matter how good, reads like a footnote or an afterthought in this book.

Tom Wolfe points out in his preface that the low-rent aura of the stars in these pages (himself excepted) would have been unthinkable twenty-five years ago, when glamour was intimately tied to a look of money and elegance. Madonna may live in a palace but she dresses like early thrift shop, and some of these men and women have so little apparent attachment to worldly goods that they've given up clothes altogether. *Rolling Stone* has been one of the pioneers of



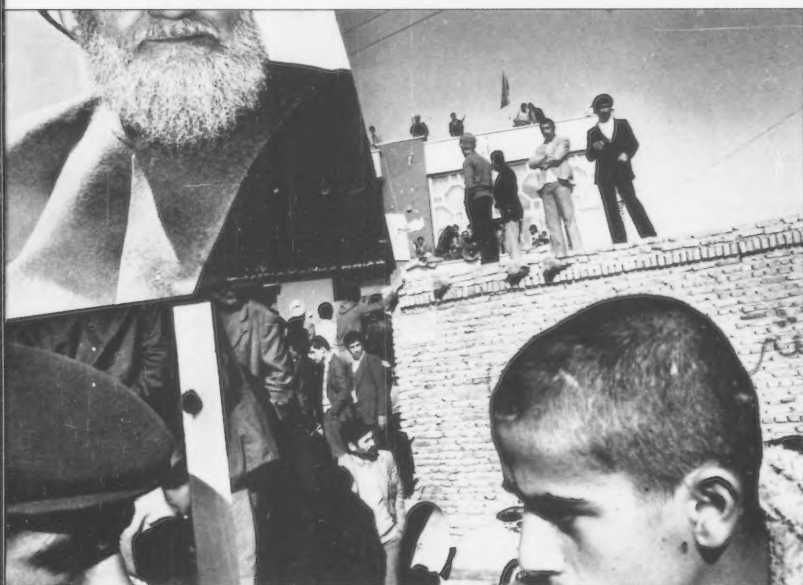
Richard Avedon, George Wallace, *Rolling Stone*, 1976. In Avedon's landmark series of portraits, America's movers and shakers looked lost, isolated, and oppressed by fate.

the shock-value portrait so crucial to the persona of the recent celebrity set. Leibovitz deserves a lot of the credit (or blame) for this; her camera seems to be plugged in to an electric guitar, its f-stops labeled *funky*, *risqué*, and *slap-you-in-the-face*. Lily Tomlin flirtatiously thrusts a hairy armpit at us, a naked John Lennon curls like a fetus about his fully clad wife, Alice Cooper grimaces at a large snake getting lost in his hair. Leibovitz doesn't make portraits of people so much as symbols of them, and this has become a kind of *Rolling Stone* style: pictures of people pretending to be icons of themselves.

It may not be necessary to say that this can lead to excess. The photographers acrobatically search for ideas, but the stars have been seen so often they are now little more than images of themselves; one might as well photograph one of their photographs. This rank recognizability is acknowledged in portraits of Norman Mailer obscured by a scuba mask, Jack Nicholson under water, and the top of Tracy Chapman's head.

A few of these portraits have become icons on their own. Their fame and that of their subjects are partly responsible for the decreasing space devoted to photojournalism: stars crowd the pages once occupied by current reports, and journalism for the masses is more or less relegated to interludes narrated by television stars on the seven o'clock news.

Gilles Peress, Magnum, Iranian demonstration, Tabriz, 1980. The photographs Peress made in Iran are composed with style, packed with information, and ultimately ambiguous, as if news is no longer a simple, straightforward matter.



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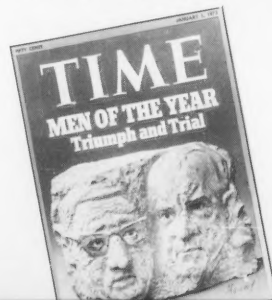
SHORT TAKES

MAN — OR MEN? — OF THE YEAR

An innocent pleasure that came with my office was the pondering, starting every September, of the choice for *Time's* Man of the Year. Nominations were invited from the news bureaus all over the world, from writers, researchers, department editors in New York, and their sales pitches could be impassioned. Melodramatic precautions were taken to preserve security. The top editors did their secret winnowing of the names, several writers might be assigned to camouflage stories, and one team went to work on the real article.

Subscribers — and subjects — could get quite stirred up. The subject had to be let in on the secret, of course, so he would give our people the necessary interviewing time, and let them rummage through old photo albums if need be. Thus informed, Henry Kissinger, national security adviser, uncrowned secretary of state, phoned me at home one night in December 1972 to "plead" — just for the record, I suspect — that he not be made co-Man of the Year with President Richard Nixon. He said his boss wouldn't like the joint billing. We thought it was warranted by their collaboration in détente with the Soviets and the efforts to wind down the Vietnam War. When I told Kissinger, no, it was going to be the two of them, he tried to work on Grunwald, who came up with an answer I wished I had thought of: that if the professor didn't stop bothering us, we might leave him on the cover all by himself. A faint doubt lingers in my mind as to how deeply this outcome would have distressed Dr. Kissinger.

FROM **RIGHT PLACES, RIGHT TIMES**
BY HEDLEY DONOVAN
HENRY HOLT. 463 PP. \$27.95





THE WELL-TEMPERED NEWSROOM

Forty years later my months at [the London Times at] Printing House Square seem almost mythical. Could it really be true that I dined each evening in an eighteenth-century office dining room, served by a butler and offered snuff from an enameled box with a picture of St. Petersburg on it? Did the foreign news editors really assure me that, if I were ever to be killed in the service of the paper, I could be certain of a decent obituary? Am I romancing, or did I truly hear Eric Shipton, the mountaineer, discussing the prospects of representing the *Times* in Latin America, say in all seriousness that he could not of course live in a city, but would have to be based in the Andes somewhere?

Here is one of my favorite stories about Printing House Square. It may not be so funny in itself, but its very tone and temper evokes in me the fustian magic of my time in that place. In the story, the paper's dramatic critic, finding himself in a theater that is burned down in the course of a play's first night, turns in a perfectly straightforward critique of the performance, remarking only that he cannot comment upon the ending, because the theater burned down during Act Three. The editor sends him a gentle note next day, suggesting that if such a thing happens another time, he might perhaps contribute a brief report on the calamity to the news pages. "My dear editor," the critic replies, "you seem to be under a misapprehension as to the nature of my employment with the *Times*. I am your Dramatic Critic, not your newshound."

FROM **PLEASURES OF A TANGLED LIFE**
BY JAN MORRIS
RANDOM HOUSE. 209 PP. \$18.95

THE PEOPLE vs. FREE SPEECH

The common notion that free speech prevails in the United States always makes me laugh. It is actually hedged in enormously both in peace and in war. All the ideas with which my name is associated had to be launched during the interval between 1925 and 1940, and even in that interval there were several attempts to silence me. Twice in one lifetime I have been forced to shut down altogether — first in 1916 and then in 1941. Even during the interval I have mentioned I was constantly menaced by censorships of a dozen different varieties, and they greatly incommoded me while I was editing the *American Mercury*. The American people, I am convinced, really detest free speech. At the slightest alarm they are ready and eager to put it down. Looking back, I sometimes marvel that I managed, despite this implacable hostility, to launch some of my notions. War, in this country, wipes out all the rules of fair play, even those prevailing among wild animals. Even the dissenters from the prevailing balderdash seek to escape the penalties of dissent by whooping up the official doctrine. From that ignominy, at all events, I have managed to escape.

FROM **THE DIARY OF H.L. MENCKEN**

EDITED BY CHARLES A. FECHER. ALFRED A. KNOPF. 544 PP. \$30



WORD PERFEC

[Harold Ross] said, that afternoon in the corridor, that he had hated misprints ever since an early issue of *The New Yorker*, but he had learned, in that green issue, to be humble in his contest with them. It seems that the magazine had bought for that issue an article by S.J. Perelman about the habits and manners of New York theater audiences. Those audiences, Perelman had written, "would laugh at the drop of a ha on the stage." Ross could see bad trouble ahead. On the very first galley he wrote in big letters: "THIS IS PERELMAN'S JOKE. DO NOT CHANGE TO 'HAT'." Through galley after revised galley Ross nursed this line unchanged. He grew obsessed by that "ha." It became so important to him that when the magazine was finally to be run off, he actually climbed into the press, looked up at one of the rollers for the right page — he told me he had learned in his newspaper days to read cold type in its upside-down and backward state — and saw, to his relief, "ha." Not quite satisfied, he assembled the printers and told them that they must not, under any circumstances, change that word. He went happily home and slept soundly all night.

In the morning, he went to the office, opened the magazine to the Perelman piece, and saw "hat." Then he realized that he had lectured the printers at eleven-forty-five. At midnight, a new shift had come on. A zealous artisan had seen the obvious error, stopped the presses, and made the change.

I retell this story of Ross's because I have cherished it all my life as a lesson. His story was a fable, the moral of which is: a writer, even more than an editor, should care so passionately about every word he uses that he will be willing to risk his life by climbing into a press at the last moment to make sure the words on the roller are the ones he has chosen — but, alas, he must also know that there is no way in the world for him to produce a work that is perfect in every word.



Ross as portrayed in *The New Yorker's* first anniversary issue

FROM **LIFE SKETCHES**

BY JOHN HERSEY. ALFRED A. KNOPF. 377 PP. \$19.95

LETTERS

THE EYE OF THE BEHOLDER

◆ If you wanted a new look that was cheap and tacky, one contrived to convince the established readers that you are leaving us for a pop audience maybe bored with *Mother Jones* or tired of *The New Republic*, an audience curious about the press but outside it, an audience that buys its magazines in supermarkets rather than through subscription, your new look is a resounding success.

As night follows day, content will shortly follow form.

Whatever is happening up there?

REY BERRY
CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA.

◆ You can't imagine the craven fear with which I opened your November issue with the wrap that proclaimed, "Presenting a new look for the nation's #1 media review."

Not again, I muttered to myself. The graphic designers have gotten hold of another magazine I like. In every case, the graphic designers had commanded the use of big graphics and larger type. The actual content had been gutted. I have no idea how these magazines are doing now, but I have dropped them all. You see, I get a magazine for the content, not the graphics.

Imagine my surprise, then, upon going through the November/December *CJR*. Content lived! The look was new and brighter. In short, design had been put at the service of substance.

Whatever will they think of next?

RICHARD THOMPSON
PRINCE FREDERICK, MD.

HE'S NO LEONA

◆ In your November/December Dart to *The New York Times Magazine*, you state that S.I. Newhouse and his brother were accused of "dodging" taxes, and in the same sentence you refer to the Leona Helmsley tax case. You failed to point out that Helmsley was charged with tax evasion (a crime, a

The editors welcome letters from readers. To be considered for publication in the January/February issue, letters should be received by January 20. Letters are subject to editing for clarity and space.

felony in fact), while the Newhouse case was a civil matter, in which the Newhouse estate and the IRS disagreed over the value to be placed on the Newhouse empire for estate tax purposes. Although the IRS did originally assert civil penalties, those penalties were eventually dropped, and no criminal charges were ever involved. That's a big difference. As a result, the vague term "dodging" should not have been used, and a comparison to the Helmsley case was entirely inappropriate.

PHILIP N. JONES
PORTLAND, ORE.

THE SHAFTING

◆ Thank you for publishing what is probably the nastiest, bitchiest book review ever to appear in *CJR*. I refer to Jane Amsterdam's hatchet job on Al Neuharth's *Confessions of an S.O.B.*. If such bitchiness represents the "new" *CJR*, then I am all for it. Away with dull, balanced reviews! Let's have more shafting of people, more *ad hominem* attacks.

HOWARD MAXWELL
WASHINGTON, D.C.

LONELY FELLOWS

◆ Stephen Simurda's article, "Are You Sure You Want To Be a Fellow?" (*CJR*, November/December) implied, but never stated, a sad fact of fellowship life: nine of the top ten concentrate on print, while only one, the Benton Fellowships at the University of Chicago, is exclusively devoted to broadcast journalists.

Print reporters should rejoice that, despite the resistance of some editors, there is a tradition of continuing education in their craft.

Broadcast news directors and station managers frequently complain that many undergraduate journalism schools offer little more than a trade school education. Yet the same managers too often balk when an employee asks for a leave to take a fully paid fellowship which may make up the educational deficit. They do not see the return on investment.

This year, one Benton Fellow is concentrating on Eastern Europe, the site of his next assignment. He is learning here while we pay for his salary and fringes. That is a terrific return on investment.

Curious, isn't it, that fast-track managers

are sent by their companies at up to \$25,000 a clip to spend as much as six months at the Harvard Business School, yet these same managers will balk when a line reporter or producer asks for a leave to take a fellowship which pays full salary.

We have recently offered the attraction of a world-class business school to news managers who want to apply for a salaried Benton fellowship. It's going to be interesting to see if they take the bait.

PETER M. HERFORD
WILLIAM BENTON FELLOWSHIPS
IN BROADCAST JOURNALISM
THE UNIVERSITY OF CHICAGO
CHICAGO, ILL.

STILL SPINNING

◆ I am compelled by professional ethics to respond to Bruce Porter's article "The Scanlon Spin" (*CJR*, September/October). My response is not intended to criticize Porter's article per se; in fact, I found the piece to be quite informative. I do object strongly, however, to your author's abuse of information in the section of his article pertaining to the *Lakian vs. The Boston Globe* libel suit. I served as public relations counsel at the trial on a daily basis to John Lakian and his noted attorney, Roy Grutman.

Porter deliberately ignored comments he solicited from me by telephone regarding the public relations sensitivity concerning the court proceedings, and he presented a precipitous act by Mr. Scanlon as a brilliant public relations maneuver. I refer specifically to the passage in which Porter describes how a document was made available to the media the day before it was to be presented as evidence. This clearly violated Judge Jacobs's instructions and was cited by him as a violation. Rather than being a public relations coup, as Porter would have readers believe, the incident nearly cost Scanlon's client the trial at an early stage.

This information is in the court transcript, which I suspect Porter did not take time to read during his research for the article. Incidentally, to set the record straight for your readers, *The Boston Globe* did not win the suit.

LEO J. MURRAY
PRESIDENT
PR ASSOCIATES
NEW YORK, N.Y.

FOLLOW-UP

REPORTER'S REWARD

◆ Last March, readers of *The Day* in New London, Connecticut, stood in line to attack a front-page feature profile by reporter Stan DeCoster about a drug dealer, pimp, and loan shark named Malcolm Shankle (see "The Hustler of *The Day*, *CJR*, September/October). In October, it was DeCoster's peers who stood in line — to shake his hand.

The story, which many readers criticized as a glorification of a small-time hood, was awarded a first prize in feature writing by the New England Associated Press News Executives Association. Among the congratulations was a note from Reid MacCluggage, the newspaper's publisher, who nonetheless stood by his earlier public criticism of the story.

Marcel Dufresne

THE PRESS WAKES UP TO RSI

◆ Three years have passed since *CJR* called attention to a number of painful and often disabling afflictions known collectively as repetitive strain injury in a cover story titled "A Newsroom Hazard called RSI" (*CJR*, January/February 1987). The authors of that article were Diana Hembree, a staff writer at the Center for Investigative Reporting, in San Francisco, and Sarah Henry, an associate at the center. In a recent memorandum to *CJR*, Hembree and Henry recalled that when they began investigating the incidence of RSI among journalists using video display terminals, "the U.S. occupational health experts we interviewed associated the disorder almost exclusively with repetitive factory work" and assured them that among VDT users the disorder was "extremely rare." In the article, a spokesman for the American Newspaper Publishers Association was quoted as saying, "We know of no major problem [with RSI] in the newspaper industry."

Nearly two years after the *Review's* RSI article appeared, *The New York Times* ran a piece on the subject in which RSI was called "the occupational disease of the '80s." Gina Kolata, who wrote the December 8, 1988, article, passed up the opportunity to link the affliction to the newsroom, except perhaps in a sentence that mentions "office workers who type at computer terminals" as among those who "are complaining of injuries in record numbers."

Four months later, *Newsday* ran a six-page package of articles on RSI with a running head that read, in part, REPETITIVE STRAIN INJURY MAY BE OCCUPATIONAL DISEASE OF THE '90s. In the lead article, reporter Ronald E. Roel pointed out that RSI had recently become the leading occupational illness in the nation, according to the Bureau of Labor Statistics, adding that "almost 73,000 RSI cases were reported in 1987, the most recent year for which data is available." Another article in the April 30, 1989, package was one by Dena Bunis, a staff writer who had written about RSI, had counseled others on its dangers, and realized she herself had it when she woke up one October morning in 1988 with severe pain in her right hand and wrist and arm. Six months later, after seeing five doctors and visiting a physical therapist three times a week, she returned to work, she wrote, "in a fashion — along with two of the half-dozen *Newsday* reporters disabled by RSI. (Another dozen are working with milder cases.) We do things that don't require typing, such as reading manuscripts, collecting data for stories, and some limited reporting with the use of tape recorders. (This story was partially dictated into a recorder and typed by a transcriber.)"

Among other publications that have run useful articles on RSI over the past two and a half years are the *San Jose Mercury News* (March 10, 1987), *Business Week* (October 10, 1988, and January 30, 1989), *The Boston*



Globe (February 19, 1989), the *Los Angeles Times Magazine* (March 12, 1989), the *San Francisco Chronicle* (June 12, 1989), and *The Fresno Bee* (September 10, 11, 12, 1989). Also, to cite only one recent example of broadcast coverage, on November 8 *The CBS Evening News* aired a piece on what "occupational health experts predict . . . will be the number one danger in the workplace in the 1990s."

In its May/June 1989 issue, *The Bulletin of the American Society of Newspaper Edi-*

STATEMENT OF OWNERSHIP, MANAGEMENT, AND CIRCULATION

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tors ran a cover story titled "Editors are Scrambling to Deal with Growing Menace of VDT-Related Injuries." John G. Taylor, who wrote the piece, is news editor of the Fresno, California, *Bee* and himself an RSI sufferer. "For me," he wrote, "RSI began with tingling fingers and hands that fell asleep. Pain migrated from my wrists, up my arms and into my shoulder and neck until all those areas hurt at the same time." After a year of treatment, including three months of physical therapy sessions, his "pain level has receded markedly," Taylor wrote, adding, "But I no longer put in eight to ten hours daily behind a VDT with few breaks, and I never expect to again."

Taylor's piece contained some worrisome figures. "Ten of 16 copy editors and wire editors on my staff have been affected by RSI so far," he wrote. He went on to point out that from May 1987, when the first case of RSI was reported at *The Fresno Bee*, to late April 1989, "42 *Fresno Bee* employees from several departments had been treated. That compares with more than 200 at the *Los Angeles Times* over the last four years." Taylor went on to mention "about 10 RSI cases" at *The Orange County Register* and 15 at the *San Jose Mercury News* — figures derived from what he called unscientific phone-call surveys.

In his article, Taylor touches on three themes common to most tellings of the RSI story. One has to do with the emotional turmoil and financial cost that can result from being disabled by RSI: "I've seen marriages in danger of breaking up. I know of homes put on the market because disability pay is bread-and-water wages." A second theme has to do with how some employers are responding to the RSI problem. Some newspaper companies, Taylor wrote, "are investing hundreds of thousands of dollars in therapy, equipment, and medical care. . . ." And protocols are being established "that require all employees to view VDT training and safety videos." The third theme has to do with less enlightened management responses: "I've watched my skilled desk editors go on disability and struggle back to work part-time, dulled by pain and medication. It's made me bridle over stories about editors at other papers who view RSI as a new trick malcontents have come up with to get back at management."

It is not only editors — or some editors — who regard RSI as spurious. In its December 1988 issue, *American Psychologist*, a publication of the American Psychological Association, ran an article titled "The Mystery of RSI." The authors were Sara Kiesler, a professor of social sciences and social psychology at Carnegie Mellon University in Pittsburgh, and Tom Finholt, a graduate stu-

dent. The article focused not on the American workplace but on Australia, where, the authors state in their abstract, repetitive strain injury "is rampant . . . and threatens to overwhelm the workers' compensation system."

The article contains some startling statements. While carpal tunnel syndrome — one of the most serious repetitive strain injuries — "is known in the United States," the authors assert, "it is rare and is infrequently mentioned in conjunction with office work or computers." (This clashes head on with reporting in the fine *San Jose Mercury News* article of March 10, 1987: "Carpal tunnel syndrome is among the fastest-increasing of the [RSI problems]. Between 1983 and 1985, the latest year for which statistics have been compiled, carpal tunnel cases that caused missed workdays in California increased 107 percent, from 240 to 496 cases, according to the state Department of Industrial Relations.") Again, in a passage that does not seem to be intentionally humorous, Kiesler and Finholt write: "At this time, we cannot rule out a physical cause [of RSI] attributable to Australia, such as meat in the diet, presence of snakes and crocodiles, or reverse torque of the Australian continent." Finally, the authors say they believe that the root cause of RSI is "dissatisfaction with the workplace that is revealed when new technology is introduced." This dissatisfaction, they go on to say, "is expressed in the form of 'techno-illnesses,' such as RSI."

The article, it should be noted, was subjected to peer review. When pedigreed psychologists regard RSI as an ailment to which disgruntled Luddites are peculiarly vulnerable, it is hardly surprising that some editors and publishers should also entertain such a notion.

There is, admittedly, no accurate tally of the number of employees of news organizations who suffer from RSI. In his ASNE *Bulletin* piece, John Taylor cites 277 cases of RSI among employees at four California newspapers. John Small, assistant editor of *The Guild Reporter*, a publication of The Newspaper Guild, says that a recent survey found 134 cases of RSI at Guild-represented papers, which, if one discounts some overlapping of figures, would bring the total number uncovered by these two editors to roughly 400 cases.

The figures, though interesting, don't mean much. One complicating factor is that employees tend to report RSI "only when they feel they have a little bit of support" from management, as Louis Slesin, editor of *VDT News*, explained to *Newsday's* Ronald Roel. Also, even today, a lot of journalists don't know what's hit them — until they come across a description of it in some publication other than their own. ♦

The Lower case

Bush views area, death toll drops

Portsmouth (N.H.) Herald 10/20/89

After 34 Years of Columns, James Reston Offers Some Thoughts

The Associated Press 11/13/89

At least Filipinos killed in landslide

Billings (Mont.) Gazette 9/17/89

N.J. jails for women in need of a face lift

Daily Record (Morristown, N.J.) 11/24/89

Numbers running unopposed

By TOM SOMACH
Globe-Times reporter

Although one seat on the five-member Upper Saucon Township Board of Supervisors is up for election this year, only one candidate is running for the position.

R. Thomas Numbers is running unopposed in the general election for the seat, just as he did in the primary last spring.

The Globe-Times (Bethlehem, Pa.) 10/30/89

Alleged con brilliantly executed

The Oakland Press (Pontiac, Mich.) 10/26/89

Sinspiration Sunday at Country Chapel

A sinspiration will take place at 7:30 p.m. Sunday in the Country Chapel.

Record-Argus (Greenville, Pa.) 10/27/89

BEST BET

'Who's the Boss?'

8 p.m., [2] [9].

Sam (Alyssa Milano) succumbs to peer pressure, but finally learns it is okay to say now to alcohol.

The Columbus (Ga.) Ledger-Inquirer 8/13/89

Unemployed attack dogs in barracks

The Globe and Mail (Toronto, Ont.) 12/5/89

Black eyes win in Virginia

Waterbury (Conn.) Republican 10/30/89

Hundreds vaccinated after death

Waxahachie (Tex.) Daily Light 10/23/89

The earthquake that hit the Bay Area last Tuesday has caused a record 11-day layoff between Series games.

The earthquake also caused death and destruction.

The Honolulu Advertiser 10/24/89

Can you read this newspaper?

The Allentown (Pa.) Morning Call 9/29/89

Mary Klunk, Morning Call marketing services manager, said the paper surpline in American adult newspaper readership — which has dropped by 10 percent in the last 35 years — tells us that there is a problem we cannot afford to veed 849 people who canceled subscriptions and found they generally don't have time to read.

Typical responses were: "I don't have no time to read so it's useless" and "They should give people what they want."

An aerial, black and white photograph of Manhattan, New York. The image shows the dense grid of streets and buildings, with Central Park visible in the center. The Hudson River is on the left, and the East River is on the right. The overall tone is high-contrast and grainy.

ABSOLUT MANHATTAN.

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